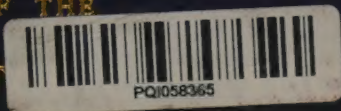


PAPERS
OF THE
MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF
MASSACHUSETTS



Bill Evans
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1^o Brigade Wheaton

93° PA

98° PA

102° PA

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62° NY

PAPERS
OF THE
MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF
MASSACHUSETTS

VOLUME IV.

THE WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN
MAY — JUNE 1864

Note.—Citations of the War Records, published after the papers in this Volume and Volume III were read before the Society, have been added by the authors or editors for the publications.

ERRATA.

Vol. 1, Ed. of 1895, p. 41. In 18th line, for "before" read "after," and in 19th line, for "letter" read "latter," thus making the passage run: "Patterson, in his testimony and 'Narrative,' places this despatch after Scott's of the 18th above quoted, but if the text of the latter" etc.

Vol. 3, p. 469. The paragraph beginning, "A French writer of distinction," and ending at the bottom of the page, should be omitted, as it is out of place here through an error in copying manuscript. It appears in its proper connection on pages 70 and 71.

THE
WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN

MAY — JUNE 1864

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M. & S. Medical and Surgical History of the Rebellion.

BADEAU. Badeau's Military History of General Grant.

SWINTON. Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac. Revision and Reissue by
William Swinton.

GRANT'S MEMOIRS. Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant.

VA. CAMP. The Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65. By Andrew A. Humphreys.

N. & L. Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America 1861-1865. By
Thomas L. Livermore.

WALKER. History of the Second Army Corps in the Army of the Potomac.
By Francis A. Walker.

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numbers."

C. W. Report of Committee on Conduct of the War. Part 1.

S. H. S. Papers Southern Historical Society.

I

OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN OF 1864

BY

CAPTAIN CHARLES H. PORTER

39TH MASSACHUSETTS INFANTRY, U. S. V.

Read before the Society April 4, 1899

OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN OF 1864

UPON the return of the Army of the Potomac in December, 1863, from the Mine Run campaign, all active operations ceased. The troops took up encampments on the neck of land between the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers. Many of the troops occupied the identical camps vacated by them at the opening of this campaign.

Under instructions from Washington, Meade was authorized to put the army into winter quarters, and he could remain in his present quarters, or, for convenience in supplying it, he could occupy ground north of the Rappahannock.

Meade decided to occupy the ground already held by us, and with slight changes the troops were put into winter quarters. The 1st corps, in advance, and nearest the Rapidan River, connected on the right and left with the 6th and 3d corps, with headquarters at Culpeper Court House; the 6th swung around to the right, with headquarters at Welford House; the 3d was on the left, with headquarters near Culpeper; the 2d was still further to the left, with headquarters at Stevensburg; the 5th was in the rear, and had guards along the railroad from Rappahannock Station to Bull Run, with corps headquarters at Rappahannock Station. Camp guards were established; also extensive picket lines, heavily supported by reserves. Outside of these infantry lines was a long cordon of cavalry vedettes, unbroken except at one place, where an infantry picket was maintained on the line of the cavalry outposts. This was at Mitchell's Station. For a short time there were two brigades of infantry, but one was withdrawn early in the winter. The brigade occupying the line with cavalry vedettes was 1st brigade, 2d division, 1st corps.

General Merritt's cavalry division was on the right, General Kilpatrick's on the left, and General Gregg's in the rear, with headquarters at Warrenton Junction.

There was little to vary the monotony of drill and picket. The troops were comfortably housed in good huts, abundantly supplied with the regular service ration, and were as free from scares and alarms as you could possibly imagine.

In January, 1864, Burnside was authorized to recruit the 9th corps to 50,000 men, and be ready in the spring to execute any movement that should be ordered. Hancock was summoned to Washington, and as a result he was authorized to recruit his corps (the 2d), to 50,000 men.

It will be remembered that a letter was sent early in 1864 to various generals asking them for opinions as to the best methods for making successful campaigns in the East. To this circular General Grant, at that time in command of the Mississippi Department, replied advising a descent upon the enemy in North Carolina, looking to the capture of Wilmington, the cutting of the railroad communication in that state, the capture of Raleigh, and thus compelling the evacuation of Richmond.

The quiet of the army was not disturbed until February, 1864. General Butler, then in command at Fort Monroe, conceived that a rapid movement could be made against Richmond, in order to liberate the prisoners at Libby and Belle Isle and cause great consternation in that city. To secure success he requested that the Army of the Potomac should make a demonstration against Lee to prevent his sending troops to the defense of that city. General Sedgwick was temporarily in command of the army, General Meade being sick in Philadelphia. Sedgwick at once replied that he would do so, although a move at this time and in this way might preclude a success should later an attempt be made in earnest. Accordingly on the 5th of February, the 2d corps moved in obedience to orders to Morton's Ford on the Rapidan River.

The corps for this movement was temporarily under the command of General Caldwell, General Warren being unable by reason of illness to go out with the troops. Instead of a demonstration, the movement was converted into a real attack. The troops under Hayes forded the river, rushed up the hill, and actually drove the Confederates from their intrenchments. It was a real surprise, and could by any means our army have been brought up promptly in force, we could have taken the camps and met and beaten the enemy in detail. Meanwhile the 1st corps had been pushed down to Raccoon Ford. Merritt's cavalry division had deployed at Barnett's Ford and Kilpatrick's at Germanna and the lower fords. General Warren reached the ground about 4 P. M., and by this time the enemy had been somewhat reinforced, and Webb was put across the river to assist Hayes. The demonstration having been made and our men being in a rather precarious situation, General Warren, under cover of the night, withdrew both Hayes's and Webb's divisions to the north side of the river. Our losses were 210 killed, wounded, and missing. After remaining at the fords for two days, the troops were withdrawn to their camps. The enemy, profiting by this surprise, immediately began fortifying the ground on the south bank, and in a very short time had made it secure against another attack. Thus you see that the movement prevented our crossing at this point again, and the demonstration brought about the condition suggested by Sedgwick. Quiet came to us until the 28th of February, when Kilpatrick started on his raid upon Richmond. The 6th corps was pushed out on the north to distract attention, and the cavalry, crossing at Ely's Ford, hurried through the woods of Chancellorsville on their way to Richmond. The death of Colonel Dahlgren was the most conspicuous result of the raid, and the finding of certain papers on his body led to a correspondence between Generals Lee and Meade as to whether or not the papers were a part of the official instructions to that commander.

Early in the winter, General Meade had requested authority to reorganize the army, by reducing the number of the corps to three. This authority was granted to the general after a good deal of correspondence, and in March, 1864, the 1st corps was consolidated with the 5th; two divisions of the 3d were assigned to the 2d, and one division of the 3d went to the 6th corps. Three corps commanders were removed, — General Newton of the 1st, General French of the 3d, and General Sykes of the 5th, — the first two by reason of consolidation; the last to give place to General Warren, who was assigned to the command of the enlarged corps. General Hancock retained command of the 2d, and General Sedgwick of the 6th. The 2d and 5th corps had each four divisions, the 6th three. The result of this consolidation was to give three corps with the average strength of about 25,000 men each. In the light of the experience gained in the campaign, I think there is no doubt that these corps were too large to be successfully handled. I am quite sure that in the Wilderness battle, smaller commands well handled would have been better than the larger ones.

Again it produced a certain amount of dissatisfaction among the men. We were proud of our records. The 1st corps had been almost wiped out on the first day at Gettysburg, yet its heroic bravery had saved the day, and caused hesitation in Lee's mind and made possible the assembling of our army on Cemetery Ridge. The 3d corps, among the first organized, with a record unsurpassed, and whose gallantry on every field was conspicuous, did not relish being merged into another corps. It is true we could wear our old distinctive badges, but our corps name was blotted out from the page of history. I think the men fought quite as well as ever, but while doing so there was always the feeling of regret that this or that success did not redound to the credit of our old corps.

Whatever may have been in the minds of the authorities at Washington, the reviving of the rank of lieutenant-general,

and the assignment of General Grant to that rank, put the military affairs of the nation upon the right basis. Hereafter there was to be one supreme control of military affairs, and all operations were to be directed from one headquarters.

General Grant visited the Army of the Potomac, and a short stay removed all doubts, if any ever existed in his mind, as to the movements to be taken. He ordered Burnside to assemble his command at Annapolis, ordered a division of the 9th corps from East Tennessee, and thus gave the name to the troops assembling at that point. On his return from the West, he took up his headquarters at Culpeper Court House, and prepared for the opening of the great campaign.

At the close of the Mine Run campaign, the Confederate army resumed its old position south of the Rapidan. It was composed of two corps, those of Hill and Ewell. General Lee's headquarters were at Orange Court House. His force was disposed in camps covering as much ground as was necessary to give ample room for camps and drill-grounds, and also to afford healthy quarters for the men. Ewell was on the right, Hill on the left. A large portion of his cavalry under Rosser was detached to operate in the Valley of the Shenandoah, and against the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Early was also in the Valley in command of the whole force. Longstreet, after his unsuccessful assault on Knoxville, had retreated into the hills to the northeast of that city, and while he was absolutely quiet, his position was one which most seriously threatened our occupation of East Tennessee. Had it been decided by the Confederate authorities to advance against our lines of communication, as Longstreet most earnestly advised, the whole military situation would have been greatly changed. The difficulty of procuring supplies and transportation prevented this scheme from being seriously considered. The activity in the East and West, after Grant's promotion, shaped the military situation. Lee perceived that the Army of the Potomac was being reinforced. He soon learned of the

massing of the new force under Burnside at Annapolis, and in turn he ordered Longstreet to join him in his present position, concentrating that corps at Gordonsville, a most advantageous position to be used in the event of either flank being assailed.

Lee was seriously hampered for supplies. He never was able to have over three days' rations on hand, and more often only one day's supply. He detached Hampton to Hamilton's Crossing, where there was better grazing for his horses, and where also the lower fords of the Rappahannock could be observed. The whole winter was devoted on both sides to serious and earnest preparation for the coming spring. It was evident that from this time on it was to be a battle to the death. On the 9th of April Grant issued to Meade his first general instructions. I quote:¹

"For information and as instructions to govern your preparations for the coming campaign the following is communicated confidentially, for your own perusal alone:

"So far as practicable, all the armies are to move together and toward one common centre. . . . Sherman will move at the same time you do, or two or three days in advance, Joe Johnston's army being his objective point. . . .

"Lee's army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also. The only point upon which I am now in doubt is whether it will be better to cross the Rapidan above or below him. Each plan presents great advantages over the other, with corresponding objections. By crossing above, Lee is cut off from all chance of ignoring Richmond and going north on a raid; but if we take this route, all we do must be done while the rations we start with hold out; we separate from Butler so that he cannot be directed how to co-operate. By the other route, Brandy Station can be used as a base of supplies until another is secured on the York or James

¹ 60 W. R. 827.

River. These advantages and objections I will talk over with you more fully than I can write them.

“Burnside, with a force of probably 25,000 men, will reinforce you. . . .

“There will be naval coöperations on the James River, and transports and ferries will be provided, so that should Lee fall back into his intrenchments at Richmond, Butler’s force and yours will be a unit, or at least can be made to act as such. . . .

“Should Lee’s right flank be our route, you will want to make arrangements for having supplies of all sorts promptly forwarded to White House, on the Pamunkey. Your estimates for this contingency should be made at once. If not wanted there, there is every probability they will be wanted on the James River or elsewhere.

“If Lee’s left is turned, large provision will have to be made for ordnance stores. I would say not much short of 500 rounds of infantry ammunition would do. By the other, half the amount would be sufficient.

“U. S. GRANT,

“Lieutenant-General.”

It will be noted that while in January Grant suggested operations in North Carolina, in the circular he completely abandons the idea. He says in regard to this, that it was never really considered, and that but one plan was really considered, namely, that of this overland campaign. The organization was now practically complete, the only changes being those made in the cavalry corps. General P. H. Sheridan, having been assigned to the command of the cavalry corps, assumed command on April 5. At his request there were some changes in division commanders. General A. T. A. Torbert, who commanded a brigade in the 6th corps, was assigned to the command of the 1st division; General D. McM. Gregg kept the 2d, and General James H. Wilson was assigned to

the command of the 3d. General Wesley Merritt held command of a brigade under Torbert.

It can be well understood that from this time on there were many consultations at headquarters as to which flank of Lee's army should be turned. The country on our right was fairly open, in which the troops could be easily handled. The real objection to this line of operations lay in the fact that the Orange and Alexandria Railroad must of necessity be our line of supply. To protect this a large detail of men from the fighting line would be required, thus reducing our effective force. Again there would of necessity be large numbers of wounded to be cared for, and this line was the only one by which they could be transported to the general hospitals at Washington, relieving the field hospitals. The limit of supplies that could possibly be carried in our immense train of rather more than 4000 wagons was fifteen days, and when these were exhausted our line of supply must be called upon and utilized. Our movements could be easily seen by the enemy, and he could thus meet our dispositions with perfect ease. Longstreet's corps of two divisions was admirably placed to meet our advance should it be by our right. It seems to me that the only possible advantage by the right flank march consisted of the more open country in which to operate. From every other standpoint a movement by the left was the most promising. Once through the Wilderness the country was fairly open, and troops could be easily handled. Our lines of supply were clearly marked out. Depots or bases could be made at deep-water points all along the march, and no calls would be made from the fighting line for guards to our train. These depots were guarded by our left flank at all times.

Grant hoped that he could get through the Wilderness without a fight, and would first meet the enemy on his lines at Mine Run, and that a development to the left, a movement which was the universal rule after the campaign opened, would

bring our lines into fairly open country. With his preponderating force he hoped to have a decisive battle in which he would be the victor, and reach Richmond much earlier than he did. The Mine Run campaign also played a great part in the decision which was finally made. Both generals, Meade and Humphreys, were strongly of the opinion that we could get through this tangle of trees, swamp, and underbrush by a long, steady march, and that Lee would content himself by holding the Mine Run lines and awaiting developments. It will be remembered that on the Mine Run campaign two corps, the 6th and the 3d, crossed at Jacobs Mill Ford, just below the mouth of Mine Run, the 2d at Germanna Ford, and the 5th and 1st at Culpeper Mine Ford, swinging up to the Germanna Road after it was clear of the 2d. It will be observed that our forces were able to effect their crossing and take up their line of march on the second day across the river, and reach the position assigned them without serious resistance on the part of the enemy, except on the front of the 3d corps, and then in such a small way as to prove of no importance as affecting the general movement. For some unexplainable reason, French, at that time in command of the 3d corps, did not reach the position assigned him, and when he did move in the afternoon of the second day, he met the enemy in a good deal of force. The success in reaching these positions made Meade and Humphreys view the line of advance by the left flank as the one to be followed.

On April 25, Burnside, with his column of troops, began to relieve the 5th corps from Bull Run to Rappahannock Station, and these divisions were assembled between Brandy and Rappahannock stations, preparatory to the final move. The decision was made to move by our left flank, and General Humphreys, chief of staff, was directed by Meade to prepare the proper orders.

Before considering the order which was issued, it will be well to give the numbers of each army as nearly as can be stated.

So far as our own army is concerned, these can be given very accurately, although it must be remembered that from the number reported as "present equipped" there can safely be deducted at least ten per cent. for the real strength of the fighting line.¹ By the return of April 30, 1864, there were "*present for duty equipped*" of all arms in the Army of the Potomac, 99,438 officers and men, divided as follows:

Second Corps	26,681 officers and men		
Fifth	24,125		
Sixth	22,584		
Cavalry	12,424		
Artillery	4,801		with 150 guns
Artillery of Cavalry Corps	863		32 guns
Total	91,478		182 guns

Detailed :

Provost Guard	1,118 officers and men		
Engineers	2,276		
Reserve Artillery	2,116		
Infantry Guard for Reserve Artillery	2,450	7,960	92 guns
Total	7,960	99,438	274 guns

In addition:

Ninth Corps	19,331	42 guns
Total	118,769	316 guns

Of this force of 118,769 officers and men, there were detailed, as appears above, 7960 officers and men. If now we deduct from the 118,769, the engineers, provost guard, infantry guard to trains, and the colored division, we have a force of about 100,000 officers and men.

Of this force assembled many were new men, and particularly in the 9th corps, as there were in it but 6000 seasoned troops. In my judgment it is perfectly safe to say that there

¹ The Virginia Campaign of 1864-65, by Major-General A. A. Humphreys, U. S. A., p. 14, and Appendix, p. 408.

were not over 75,000 seasoned troops with the colors in the army, and it will be noted that one division of the 9th corps was assigned as guard to the train and never was in the fighting line until after crossing the James River.

Our supply train consisted of rather more than 4000 wagons, and in addition there was a light train which was always up with the troops.

In giving the numbers of the Confederate army it is exceedingly difficult to determine how many men were in their army.¹ General Humphreys, a most careful and painstaking officer, estimates that there were present equipped not less than 61,953 officers and men of all branches of the service, every one of which could be put on the fighting line, divided as follows :

Infantry	48,700 officers and men.
Artillery	4,854 " " "
Cavalry	8,399 with probably 224 guns.
<hr/>	
Total	61,953

I am inclined to think that there were not less than 65,000 men, and I reach this conclusion from the fact that in the roster of troops as given there are omitted not less than two or three brigades which must have been present. Moreover, these men were veterans and had fought on many a field. There were but few recruits, and the increase in numbers during the winter resulted from the return of convalescents and wounded men.

Having decided to move by the left flank, on May 2, 1864, the following order was issued. This order is most carefully drawn and is complete in its every detail, and the movements most thoroughly thought out :

¹ The Virginia Campaign of 1864-65, by Major-General A. A. Humphreys, U. S. A., p. 15.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
May 2, 1864.¹

(Orders.)

1. The army will move on Wednesday, the 4th of May, 1864.

2. On the day previous, Tuesday, the 3d of May, Major-General Sheridan, commanding cavalry corps, will move Gregg's cavalry division to the vicinity of Richardsville. It will be accompanied by one half of the canvas pontoon train, the engineer troops with which will repair the road to Ely's Ford as far as practicable without exposing their work to the observation of the enemy. Guards will be placed in all the occupied houses on or in the vicinity of the route of the cavalry and in advance of the Rapidan, so as to prevent any communication with the enemy by the inhabitants. The same precaution will be taken at the same time in front of the 1st and 3d cavalry divisions, and wherever it may be considered necessary. At 2 A. M. of the 4th May, Gregg's division will move to Ely's Ford, cross the Rapidan as soon as the canvas pontoon bridge is laid, if the river is not fordable, and, as soon as the infantry of the 2d corps is up, will move to the vicinity of Piney Branch Church, or in that section, throwing reconnoissances well out on the Pamunkey Road toward Spottsylvania Court House, Hamilton's Crossing, and Fredericksburg. The roads past Piney Branch Church, Todd's Tavern, etc., will be kept clear for the passage of the infantry the following day. The cavalry divisions will remain in this position to cover the passage of the army trains, and will move with them and cover their left flank. At midnight of the 3d of May, the 3d cavalry division, with one half the canvas pontoon bridge train, which will join it after dark, will move to Germanna Ford, taking the plank road, and cross the Rapidan as soon as the bridge is laid, if the river is not fordable, and hold the crossing until the infantry of the 5th corps is

¹ W. R. vol. lxviii. pp. 331-334.

up. It will then move to Parker's Store, on the Orange Court House Plank Road, or that vicinity, sending out strong reconnoissances on the Orange pike and plank roads and the Catharpin and Pamunkey roads, until they feel the enemy, and at least as far as Robertson's Tavern, the New Hope Church, and Ormond's or Robertson's. All intelligence concerning the enemy will be communicated with promptitude to headquarters and to the corps and division commanders of the nearest infantry troops.

3. Major-General Warren, commanding 5th corps, will send two divisions at midnight of the 3d instant, by way of Stevensburg and the plank road, to the crossing at Germanna Ford. So much of the bridge train of the 5th corps as may be necessary to bridge the Rapidan at Germanna Ford, with such artillery as may be required, will accompany these divisions, which will be followed by the remainder of the corps at such hour that the column will cross the Rapidan without delay. Such disposition of the troops and artillery as may be found necessary to cover the bridge will be made by the corps commander, who, after crossing, will move to the vicinity of the Old Wilderness Tavern, on the Orange Court House Pike. The corps will move the following day past the head of Catharpin Run, crossing the Orange Court House Plank Road at Parker's Store.

4. Major-General Sedgwick, commanding 6th corps, will move at 4 A. M. of the 4th instant, by way of Stevensburg and the Germanna Plank Road to Germanna Ford, following the 5th corps, and, after crossing the Rapidan, will bivouac on the heights beyond. The canvas pontoon train will be taken up as soon as the troops of the 6th corps have crossed, and will follow immediately in rear of the troops of that corps. So much of the bridge train of the 6th corps as may be necessary to bridge the Rapidan at Culpeper Mine Ford will proceed to Richardsville in rear of the reserve artillery, and as soon as it is ascertained that the reserve artillery are

crossing, it will move to Culpeper Mine Ford, where the bridge will be established. The engineers of this bridge train will at once open a road from Culpeper Mine Ford direct to Richardsville.

5. Major-General Hancock, commanding 2d corps, will send two divisions, with so much of the bridge train as may be necessary to bridge the Rapidan at Ely's Ford, and such artillery as may be required, at midnight of the 3d instant, to Ely's Ford. The remainder of the corps will follow at such hour that the column will cross the Rapidan without delay. The canvas pontoon bridge at this ford will be taken up as soon as the troops of this corps have passed, and will move with it at the head of the trains that accompany the troops. The wooden pontoon bridge will remain. The 2d corps will enter the Stevensburg and Richardsville Road at Madden's in order that the route from Stevensburg to the plank road may be free for the 5th and 6th corps. After crossing the Rapidan, the 2d corps will move to the vicinity of Chandler's or Chancellorsville.

6. It is expected that the advanced divisions of the 5th and 2d corps, with the wooden pontoon trains, will be at the designated points of crossing not later than 6 A. M. of the 4th instant.

7. The reserve artillery will move at 3 A. M. of the 4th instant, and follow the 2d corps, passing Mountain Run at Ross's Mill or Hamilton's, cross at Ely's Ford, take the road to Chancellorsville, and halt for the night at Hunting Creek.

8. Great care will be taken by the corps commanders that the roads are promptly repaired by the pioneers wherever needed, not only for the temporary wants of the division or corps to which the pioneers belong, but for the passage of the troops and trains that follow on the same route.

9. During the movement of the 4th and following days the commanders of the 5th and 6th corps will occupy the roads on the right flank, to cover the passage of their corps, and

will keep their flankers well out in that direction. The commanders of the 2d corps and reserve artillery will in a similar manner look out for the left flank. Whenever practicable, double columns will be used to shorten the columns. Corps commanders will keep in communication and connect with each other, and coöperate whenever necessary. Their picket lines will be connected. They will keep the commanding general constantly advised of their progress and of everything important that occurs, and will send staff officers to acquaint him with the location of their headquarters. During the movement of the 4th instant, headquarters will be on the route of the 5th and 6th corps. It will be established at night between these corps on the Germanna Plank Road.

10. The infantry troops will take with them fifty rounds of ammunition upon the person, three days' full rations in the haversacks, three days' bread and small rations in the knapsacks, and three days' beef on the hoof. Each corps will take with it one half its infantry ammunition, one half the intrenching tools, one hospital wagon and one medicine wagon for each brigade, one half the ambulance trains, and the light spring wagons and pack animals allowed at the various headquarters. No other train or means of transportation than those just specified will accompany the corps, except such wagons as may be necessary for the forage for immediate use (five days). The artillery will have with them the ammunition of the caissons only.

11. The subsistence and other trains, loaded with the amount of rations, forage, infantry, and artillery ammunition, etc., heretofore ordered, the surplus wooden pontoons of the different corps, etc., will be assembled under the direction of the chief quartermaster of the army in the vicinity of Richardsville, with a view to crossing the Rapidan by bridges at Ely's Ford and Culpeper Mine Ford.

12. A detail of 1000 or 1200 men will be made from each corps as guard for its subsistence and other trains. This

detail will be composed of entire regiments as far as practicable. No other guards whatever for regimental, brigade, division, or corps wagons will be allowed. Each detail will be under the command of an officer selected for that purpose, and the whole will be commanded by the senior officer of the three. This guard will be so disposed as to protect the trains on the march and in park. The trains are likewise protected by cavalry on the flanks and rear.

13. Major-General Sheridan, commanding cavalry corps, will direct the 1st cavalry division to call in its pickets and patrols on the right on the morning of the 4th instant, and hold itself ready to move and cover the trains of the army. It will picket and watch the fords of the Rapidan from Rapidan Station to Germanna Ford. On the morning of the 5th the 1st cavalry division will cross the Rapidan at Germanna Ford and cover the right flank of the trains while crossing the Rapidan and during their movements in rear of the army. The signal stations on Cedar, Pony, and Stony mountains will be maintained as long as practicable.

14. The wooden pontoon bridges at Germanna Ford and Ely's Ford will remain for the passage of General Burnside's army. That at Culpeper Mine Ford will be taken up, under the direction of the chief engineer, as soon as the trains have crossed, and will move with the train of its corps.

By command of Major-General Meade:

S. WILLIAMS,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

Promptly at the hours designated in the orders, the movement began, and proceeded without the slightest interruption. Everything moved with the utmost ease and regularity. There was no friction. There were no hitches. The enemy, aside from a few outposts at the fords, were not to be seen. There was absolutely no resistance to our march. The day was bright, clear, and not too warm — a day on which the troops could do

their best. The head of column reached the fords on time. Gregg cleared the way for the 2d corps, and its head of column reached Chancellorsville between nine and ten A. M. The head of column of the 5th corps was at Wilderness Tavern between twelve and one P. M. The 6th corps was well across the river by the afternoon of May 4, two divisions being pushed some three miles up the road to encamp for the night in rear of and close in support of the 5th. Wilson's division of cavalry had cleared the way from Germanna, and was well by Wilderness Tavern. He pushed out observation columns on the pike, well out to Locust Grove, and also occupied the plank road, looking to Parker's Store. Torbert had not moved but covered our right flank, on the north side of the Rapidan. One division of the 6th corps was retained to guard the wagon train, which, as well may be imagined, was a source of great anxiety to Grant and Meade. The movement was successful in every respect. The units of the army were exceedingly well handled, and in all my observation there were no movements ever made where everything was accomplished with so much ease as this opening march. The troops were in the best of spirits. They believed that the supreme effort to bring the rebellion to a close was being made. There was enthusiasm and determination in the minds of every one. The troops halted at an early hour, going into bivouac long before sunset. There is no doubt but that Warren could easily have made Parker's Store on the 4th, even using Griffin on the pike as a pivot around which to swing his other divisions. The 6th could easily have got no less than two divisions up to the Wilderness Tavern. One division could have moved out on the pike to support Griffin, and one could have been used to support the left of the 5th corps, as was actually done on the 5th of May. The great wagon train was the cause of the early camping this evening, the safety of which, together with the belief that Lee would halt at Mine Run, caused the early bivouac.

Meanwhile the enemy had not been idle. Daylight of the 4th revealed the situation, and Lee ordered Ewell to move down the pike to Mine Run, and Hill down the plank road to Parker's Store, and Longstreet was directed to move from Gordonsville to reinforce Hill on the plank road. Lee had received the news of the advance of Burnside down the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. He had been told of the changes in position of troops, all of which betokened an early move. He had been told of the move of Gregg on the 3d, but daylight of the 4th told him that Grant was turning his right flank and that the campaign had begun. He met the advance of Grant and determined to put himself in position where he could strike the flank of our army in its march through the Wilderness. His first idea was to stop at Mine Run until his army was united, but activity on the part of Ewell and Hill in pushing out beyond these lines brought on the fight at the Wilderness on May 5, directly against the orders of Lee, who continually advised both of these generals not to bring on a fight. Indeed, if I read the dispatches correctly, he had no idea or wish to fight on this day at all.

The enemy had been closely observed. The signal stations at Cedar, Pony, and Stony mountains, quickly discovered the movements of the Confederates in abandoning their camps. Huge clouds of dust were observed, and it was reported very promptly to headquarters. Our signal corps read a message from Lee which directed Hill and Ewell to occupy the Mine Run intrenchments. This dispatch was early in the hands of Grant, and I have little doubt but that it served to convince the commanding general that he could get into the positions assigned in the general order to be sent out directing movements to be made on the following day.

It has been suggested that when Grant found the enemy were in force in advance of the Mine Run line, he should have taken up the best position available and carefully intrenched his entire front. Believing as he did that we could make the

movements directed in the order which I will soon read, it seems to me that he did intend to intrench, but on the line which was to be occupied by the troops on the forenoon of the 5th of May. The marches were very short, and had there been no opposition, it is quite certain that by noon of this day our army would have been in a fine position, and one easily defended.

On the afternoon of the 4th there was issued from general headquarters the following order, dated 6 P. M. :

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
May 4, 1864, 6 P. M.¹

(Orders.)

The following movements are ordered for the 5th of May, 1864 :

1. Major-General Sheridan, commanding cavalry corps, will move with Gregg's and Torbert's divisions against the enemy's cavalry in the direction of Hamilton's Crossing. General Wilson, with the 3d cavalry division, will move at 5 A. M. to Craig's Meeting House, on the Catharpin Road. He will keep out parties on the Orange Court House pike and plank roads, the Catharpin Road, Pamunkey Road (road to Orange Springs), and in the direction of Twyman's Store and Andrew's Tavern or Good Hope Church.

2. Major-General Hancock, commanding 2d corps, will move at 5 A. M. to Shady Grove Church and extend his right toward the 5th corps at Parker's Store.

3. Major-General Warren, commanding 5th corps, will move at 5 A. M. to Parker's Store, on the Orange Court House Plank Road, and extend his right toward the 6th corps at Old Wilderness Tavern.

4. Major-General Sedgwick, commanding 6th corps, will move to Old Wilderness Tavern, on the Orange Court House Pike, as soon as the road is clear. He will leave a division to

¹ W. R. vol. lxviii. p. 371.

cover the bridge at Germanna Ford until informed from these headquarters of the arrival of General Burnside's troops there.

5. The reserve artillery will move to Corbin's Bridge as soon as the road is clear.

6. The trains will be parked in the vicinity of Todd's Tavern.

7. Headquarters will be on the Orange Court House Plank Road near the 5th corps.

8. After reaching the points designated, the army will be held ready to move forward.

9. The commanders of the 5th and 6th corps will keep out detachments on the roads on their right flank. The commander of the 2d corps will do the same on the roads on his front. These flankers and pickets will be thrown well out and their troops be held ready to meet the enemy at any moment.

By command of Major-General Meade :

S. WILLIAMS,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

The night of the 4th was quiet. On the early morning of the 5th the pickets in front of Griffin fired some few shots, and the presence of the enemy was detected. These were advanced parties supported by no force. In obedience to the instructions given in orders issued at 6 P. M., May 4, Warren, on the morning of the 5th, moved Crawford's division from his camp of the night before across the fields to the Chewning farm on his way to Parker's Store. Wilson, who had been out to Parker's Store, was early engaged with the enemy and forced from that place. The head of Crawford's column had nearly reached the plank road when his advance was met by the advance of Hill's corps, and was soon driven back by a force much larger than his own. Following Crawford were Wadsworth and Robinson's divisions. Griffin on the pike had by this time become vigorously engaged, and it was found that no movements could be made, but a line of battle formed and

attempts made to crush the enemy. It is apparent from the reading of the afternoon order of May 4 that the enemy was carefully observed and an engagement might be expected at any time, especially after the troops had reached the positions assigned them. The one that actually took place placed our army at a disadvantage, and while it resulted in a drawn battle, success just failing to stay in our grasp, which would surely have been with us if the country had been more open, I cannot but feel, however, that it was quite unfortunate for us that our march had not been at least continued for a couple of hours on May 4. Grant, having found that Lee was pushing to meet him, ordered Burnside to make a forced march, and reach the army as soon as possible. Torbert was withdrawn, and everything after May 6 was south of the Rapidan. Burnside pushed his corps, some of his troops making about forty miles, but it was a terrible blow to this corps. As quite two thirds of its men were recruits, it proved too severe on them, and as a result it reduced the effective strength not less than twenty-five per cent., and one of its divisions, the 4th, remained with the train from this time until in front of Petersburg. That Grant hoped to get through the Wilderness without a battle, is evident. That it was believed at headquarters by Meade and Humphreys to be possible, is also true. Their judgment and belief were based upon the experience gained in the Mine Run campaign.

The aggressiveness of Lee changed the situation and caused an entirely different course to be pursued.

The campaign was opened on the plan laid out by that master spirit of military science, General Humphreys, and he believed that the lines laid down were the best suited to get through the first part of our difficulties.

Would a prolongation of the march of May 4 have so far uncovered our rear and exposed the trains to harm, is the question. With Torbert north of the river, Rickett's division at the river, it seems to me that our communications were

safe, especially as Burnside was within supporting distance, and I am sure we could have kept Hill and Ewell busy on the 5th, as we did, with our troops in better position than that we were forced into. The fact is, the enemy were about half a day's march ahead of expectations, and the early halt of the first day caused delays which brought conditions not expected at headquarters.

The Army of the Potomac had crossed the Rapidan, however, for the last time. Its march was ever onward. Blows were given and received, and success was finally achieved after many weary days, nearly a year later, at Appomattox Court House.

II

LEE'S WRESTLE WITH GRANT IN THE
WILDERNESS 1864

BY

HENRY ALEXANDER WHITE

M. A., PH. D., D. D.

Read before the Society March 2, 1897

LEE'S WRESTLE WITH GRANT IN THE WILDERNESS 1864

THE spring of 1864 found the Army of Northern Virginia intrenched upon the bluffs that skirt the southern bank of the Rapidan River. Behind the army to the southward were outspread the tangled forests of the Piedmont and Tidewater sections of central Virginia. The flight of the bee toward the rear from the position of the Confederate guns would pass across the network of streams that feed the York and the James, and at the distance of sixty-five miles would find Richmond, the capital of the Southern Confederacy. Twenty miles in length was the Confederate line of defense, behind the Rapidan. The left flank was guarded by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, and the right was made strong by the intrenchments that followed the windings of the forest stream of Mine Run. From this fortress established in the midst of a land of rolling hills and level plains the Confederate cannon frowned upon every avenue of approach from the direction of Culpeper Court House. The latter was the adopted home of the Army of the Potomac, ten miles due northward from the central point in the works occupied by the Army of Northern Virginia.

The second day of May, 1864, brought General Lee to the signal station on the summit of Clark's Mountain, just behind the advanced guns of his own right wing. A simple suit of plain gray cloth formed the outward apparel of the grave, courtly Virginian. Upon his person were displayed none of the insignia of military rank. The gray slouch hat was in keeping with the unassuming dignity of the man. The frosts of three winters spent in camp had silvered the hair and made deeper the lines in the brow, but likewise had they set

a more intense glow in the eye, whose flashings often spoke of the fire that slumbered within. Unabated was Lee's natural vigor as he stood in the beauty of perfect manhood and with field-glass swept the plains of Culpeper to discern the future movements of the Army of the Potomac.

Along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad from the Rapidan far northward toward the Rappahannock, Lee could look upon a great city of tents, and above the city he saw banners unfurled in multitude to declare the presence of a vast host of Federal soldiery. Long time did Lee scan the warlike horizon. Carefully did he note the location and arrangement of the Federal encampment, to see if Grant's intent was favorable to early battle. Early battle the Federal commander seemed to desire. There was much riding to and fro; there was great commotion in Culpeper that May day, and it was evident to Lee that the Army of the Potomac would soon strike tent and advance southward.

Again Lee scans the horizon of the field of war. What route will the new commander choose? Recent cavalry movements along the borders of the upper Rapidan beyond the left flank of the Army of Northern Virginia indicate a possible advance of the Federal army in that direction. But eastward from the Confederate position lies the region of previous Federal assaults. In the distance to Lee's right is Fredericksburg, the field of Burnside; halfway between Lee's mount of observation and the Marye Heights lies Hooker's battle-ground at Chancellorsville. Immediately on his right Lee's glass may discern the course of Mine Run, from whose intrenched banks General Meade withdrew the Army of the Potomac the previous November. Only two months old in May is the memory of the cavalry raid led by Kilpatrick and Dahlgren across Ely's Ford, through Spottsylvania, upon Richmond.

While Lee thus seeks to discern the future through his glass and weighs the chances of approaching battle, his corps

and division commanders likewise scan the field and await their commander's expression of opinion. The chief of Lee's 1st army corps is Longstreet; from the beginning he has commanded one wing of the Army of Northern Virginia,—slow and deliberate on the march, impetuous and fierce in the hour of battle. Kershaw and Field stand near him, leaders of the two divisions now constituting the 1st corps. Kershaw won his spurs behind the stone wall at Fredericksburg and now commands McLaw's old division; Field has shown gallantry on many battle-grounds, and now directs the division that once followed Hood. Pickett holds the 3d division of the corps on guard near the coast of North Carolina.

The 2d corps is led by Ewell and the 3d by A. P. Hill. Both officers were one time division commanders under Stonewall Jackson. Ewell is full of eccentricities, a lover of horse-flesh, and of the wild uproar of battle.¹ Ewell's division leaders are Early, Edward Johnson, and Rodes. Early is familiarly known as "Old Jubal," about whom clings the memory of desperate struggles at Second Manassas and Sharpsburg; Edward Johnson is the fierce and sturdy son of Erin who carries a long hickory staff instead of a sword; the name of Rodes will be repeated so long as men shall speak of Jackson's flank attack upon Hooker in the Wilderness.

A. P. Hill possesses impetuosity that is often difficult to restrain; courage flashes in every glance of his eye. Since the fierce struggle on the banks of the Antietam, Lee has set high estimate upon the man who rushed in to save the imperiled Confederate right wing. Hill's divisions are directed by R. H. Anderson, Heth, and Wilcox. It was Wilcox's brigade that added renown to Longstreet's corps in the summer of 1862; Heth opened the midsummer battle of 1863 by his advance upon Gettysburg, and R. H. Anderson marched

¹ "You might have killed the finest mare in this army," he said to his own men, who had fired over the head of their approaching commander.

with McLaw's to the Confederate left in time to hold McClellan in check at Sharpsburg.

The bravest of the brave are all these officers gathered in a group about General Lee. Beyond mere courage, however, nearly all possess that skill which is able to give wise direction to battalions moving along the "perilous edge of battle."

To this company of counselors and assistants General Lee turns himself after long-continued searching of the Rapidan valley slopes. With quiet dignity he points downstream toward Chancellorsville, and gives his opinion that the Army of the Potomac will advance across the Rapidan at Germanna or Ely's Ford. He bids his officers hold the Confederate divisions in readiness to take up the line of march at the waving of the signal flag.

On that same second day of May, perhaps at the very hour when Lee's field-glass caught glimpses of the city of tents, General Meade was writing an important military order. Lee possibly could not discern the Solferino color of Meade's headquarters flag, nor could he see the golden eagle in a silver wreath wrought into the banner's folds, but already had Lee divined the intent of the commands now issued by the Federal commander, for Meade was directing the Army of the Potomac to set itself in motion across the Germanna *and* the Ely fords at the midnight hour which should usher in the 4th day of May.

This order of General Meade was written in obedience to the instructions of Lieutenant-General Grant, then commanding all the Federal forces in the field. This spring of 1864 saw only two Confederate armies yet abiding in strength. Both of these bands were facing northward, under J. E. Johnston in northern Georgia and R. E. Lee in northern Virginia. Against these armies General Grant ordered an advance "all along the line." Sherman was directed to press forward from Chattanooga against Johnston. Crook had orders to move southeastward from the mountains of western Virginia. Sigel

was sent up the valley of Virginia to threaten the Central Railroad; Butler was placed in charge of an armament intended to plough the waters of the James and usher its commander within the portals of Richmond. At the same time Grant came eastward wearing the laurels of Vicksburg and Chattanooga, and pitched his tent with the Army of the Potomac. Across the Rapidan he proposed to send Meade, with the duty laid upon him of destroying the Army of Northern Virginia. Grant's instructions to Meade were these:¹ "Lee's army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also." The purpose of Grant was set forth in other terms as the intention "to fight Lee between the Rapidan and Richmond, if he will stand."

The 4th day of May was the date assigned for the simultaneous advance of all the Federal hosts against Johnston, Lee, and Richmond. Under his own immediate direction Grant could count about 119,000 men. Into three great *corps-d'armée* was the Army of the Potomac divided. The 2d corps of 27,000 men followed the gallant, brave, and skillful Federal hero of Gettysburg, Winfield S. Hancock. The 5th corps of 24,000 was led by that officer of courtesy and courage, G. K. Warren. The 6th of 23,000 was under the command of the gallant officer and noble man who combined soldierly courage with personal tenderness. General John Sedgwick, familiarly called "Uncle John," was a beloved friend to his associates in the Federal army and to his former companions now in the Confederate service. The 9th corps of more than 19,000 was led by the former commander of the Army of the Potomac, General Burnside. General Sheridan controlled nearly 13,000 cavalry, and a park of 274 heavy guns accompanied the army. "The best clothed and the best fed army" that ever took the field was Grant's Army of the Potomac, according to the judgment of a member of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts. For the furnishing and comfort of this host

¹ 60 W. R. 828.

of armed men, Grant possessed a wagon train that would have extended in a continuous line from the Rapidan to Richmond. This tremendous engine of war was about to hurl itself across Lee's right flank in the effort to accomplish the destruction of the Army of Northern Virginia.

The worst clothed and the worst fed army that was ever mustered into service was the Army of Northern Virginia as General Lee found it on the second day of May, 1864, when he turned his face from Clark's Mountain toward his headquarters near Orange Court House. Not through a city of tents did he ride that day, but along avenues lined by rude huts of pine and oaken logs. The crevices in these structures were fortified against the winter's wind by the purest quality of Virginia mud; they were furnished inside with beds of straw. In this Confederate Valley Forge, Lee's soldiers were greeting with laughter the coming of the spring-tide, as old Sol brought warmth into the Rapidan valley, where they had shivered and starved together. The men of Virginia and Maryland were there, whose fathers had shivered and starved with Washington at the first Valley Forge. In that camp were the sons of the Virginia riflemen who had made a "bee-line for Boston" under Daniel Morgan in the brave old days of 1775, had crossed the Delaware with Washington to give battle at Trenton and Princeton, had broken the strength of Burgoyne by their unerring aim at Saratoga, had assisted in driving Cornwallis from the Carolinas, and forced his surrender at Yorktown. Under Lee's command were gathered the sons of North Carolina whose fathers had trailed muskets after Wayne at Stony Point and had followed both Washington and Greene upon the march and in the battle. South Carolina and Georgia had sent the sons and grandsons of Revolutionary veterans. In Lee's camp were men who never wearied of telling how their sires won the day at King's Mountain and Cowpens. Tennessee and Kentucky sent representatives of that line which charged to victory at the battle

of the Thames in the northwest, and also of the mountain riflemen who stood behind the breastworks at New Orleans to teach Pakenham's veterans their first lesson in defeat. In Lee's army were gathered likewise some of the selfsame men (from the South Atlantic and Mississippi Valley States) who had felt the fury of the fight at Buena Vista and climbed upward with the foremost in the storming of Chapultepec.

The *gaudium certaminis* which burned at fever heat in the soul of each individual soldier in this Army of Northern Virginia was a direct heritage from his fathers. Nearly every man was proud to detail family traditions concerning military service in one or both of the wars with England, in border warfare against Indian tribes, or in the battles beyond the Rio Grande in Mexico. Moreover, most of these Southern soldiers were descended from warlike races beyond the sea. From the Alleghany summits and foothills came the men of Ulster, offspring of those men of the moss-hags of Scotland who suffered persecution in the days of Charles II, fought at Bothwell Bridge, passed over to Ulster in Ireland, to stand with William of Orange at the Boyne and endure the pangs of hunger in Londonderry; and thence they came to fill up the western parts of Pennsylvania, Virginia, both Carolinas and Georgia, and to plant the entire states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi. From the old French and Indian War down to the war between the States these Calvinists have occupied the front line in battle, and the days of peace they have filled up as well as they could with disputations in theology. The "Stonewall Brigade" in Ewell's corps was the banner organization of these belligerent moss-troopers and mountain riflemen.

From the Tidewater section of Virginia and South Carolina came the English cavaliers, whose ancestors had followed Marlborough and Prince Rupert; whose love of good cheer and whose courtly manners made them the centre of jovial comradeship in the starving-time in camp; whose unquench-

able courage sent them to the very cannon's mouth in the hour of battle.

From the eastern part of Virginia and of South Carolina came the Huguenots, whose patient endurance under sufferings in France, whose gallantry in the days of partisan warfare under Francis Marion in the Carolina swamps, had ripened into that brave steadiness that wins the fight or dies upon the field.

Nearly all these sons of fighting sires were brought up in the quietude of plantation life ; nearly all had used the rifle ; nearly all from childhood upward had spent hours on horse-back in the mountains and the fields ; nearly all had strength and skill to make the woodland ring with the hunter's wild, echoing shout. When all these regiments of country-bred soldiers advanced in line of battle until they caught sight of the men in blue uniform, it was only the old view-halloo upon the hunting-field that had become the battle-slogan and greeted the ears of the Federal soldiers as the familiar " rebel yell." The yell and the chase were linked by long association. Scarcely a day passed during the sojourn of the Confederate army in camp that did not see a full regiment of Confederates in hot chase across the fields after the swift-footed rabbit, and at every step were heard wild shouts and yells. Often was it said when this far-resounding enthusiasm came rolling across the hills, " There goes Marse Robert or an old hare."

By day, in camp, the men moved about in rags ; their clothing was made up of patches and fluttering strings. Very few possessed shoes that fitted. Thousands were absolutely without covering for head or foot. The only complete outfits were the products of hand-looms, wrought out by wives, mothers, daughters, who kept brave watch and prosecuted unmurmuring labors in the old plantation home. At night the soldiers slept on straw and made covering with a blanket that probably bore the stamp " U. S." Their rags could be

forgotten, but hunger never. That insatiate craving for food that half-starved men must bear was the constant enemy of the Confederates in this winter home. One quarter of a pound of fat pork with a little meal or a little flour was the portion assigned daily to each man — most of the time not both of these, but either the pork or the meal was allotted. Or perhaps only a bundle of crackers was served from day to day. The officers fared as the privates.¹

Nor did General Lee permit his rank to exempt him from the sufferings that had come upon all, men and women alike, throughout the entire region of the Southern Confederacy. General Lee allowed himself a small ration of meat only twice a week. He lived on corn-bread or crackers or a bit of cabbage, as each or all came conveniently. His heart was full of concern for the comfort and health of his men. We are told that on one occasion Lee received through the mail from an anonymous private soldier a very small slice of salt pork carefully packed between two oaken chips, with the statement in a letter that this was the daily ration of meat; the writer claimed to be unable to live on this allowance, and although a gentleman, had been compelled to steal. But the commander himself fared no more sumptuously. It is stated that some official friends came to dine in General Lee's tent. The fare set before them was only a plate of boiled cabbage; in the centre of the dish rested a diminutive slice of bacon. With knife well poised above this morsel General Lee invited each guest in turn to receive a portion, but the small size of the bacon led them all to decline. The meat remained

¹ This winter of 1863 saw the climax of high prices due to the inflated paper currency of the Confederacy. Bacon, \$8 per pound; beans, \$60 per bushel; sugar, \$20 per pound; corn-meal, \$50 per bushel — *Famine!* Officer bartering for boots; price, \$200. Officer handed to the merchant a \$500 bill; merchant had no change. "Never mind, I'll take the boots; keep the change; I never allow a matter of \$300 to stand in the way of a trade." Richmond paper, autumn, 1864, chuckled over the fact that "Tar is selling in New York for \$2 a pound. It used to cost eighty cents a barrel!"

on the plate untouched, and hunger was appeased with cabbage. The following day General Lee called again for the bit of swine's flesh, but his servant, with much bowing and grinning, gave the information that the bacon had been borrowed to grace the hospitable board of the day before and already had been returned to the owner. Lee's wife and daughters and many female friends spent their time at home knitting socks for the soldiers, and these were distributed by the general himself. After a visit to Richmond he wrote to his wife expressing gratification that there were 67 pairs of socks in the bag instead of 64, as she had supposed. He rejoiced that out of the 108 pairs committed to his personal charge for the Stonewall Brigade, 12 pairs had double heels, and suggested that his daughter Mildred learn the stitch. Later he reported progress: he had sent 263 pairs of socks to the Stonewall Brigade. He wrote: "There are about 140 without socks. . . . Tell the young women to work hard for the brave Stonewallers." He also made mention of 61 pairs from the ladies in Fauquier.

Lee's winter home was a small tent pitched on a steep hillside. Around it stood two or three other tents for the convenience of his staff. No guard was on duty, not a sentinel kept watch. Naught was there to indicate the presence of an officer of rank. Everything was ordered with neatness, but with the utmost simplicity. Only the man was there to indicate the presence of one in authority. The heart was full of solicitude for the welfare of his men, for the upbuilding of the strength of his army; but the strong temper of a Washington was held under bit and curb. In hours when the patience was tried, the veins in the temple would swell and a deep flush would crimson the forehead, to show that the will to control was stronger than the hidden passion.

Unto the very utmost was this man and this army now to be tested in deadly combat with the Army of the Potomac. Only from a knowledge of the men who followed his banner

can we understand the deeds of Lee in the Wilderness campaign. The total effective number of soldiers in the army that was to withstand Grant's 119,000 was a little short of 62,000.¹ In the 3d corps at Orange Court House, A. P. Hill commanding, there were about 22,000 men and officers ready for duty. The 2d corps on the Rapidan under Ewell was reckoned at a little more than 17,000. From Knoxville, Tenn., in the month of April had Lee called Longstreet with two divisions of the 1st corps. These lay in camp at Gordonsville to the rear of Lee's left wing. Ten thousand men was the total effective force in this corps. Four batteries of four guns were assigned to each of Lee's eight infantry divisions; 72 guns were in reserve, and the 24 cannon constituted the flying artillery that moved with the cavalry. Four thousand eight hundred men served this park of 224 guns; 8300 sabres followed the black plume of "Jeb" Stuart. Almost continuously throughout the winter had this knightly trooper lived in the saddle. The right flank and the left flank of the Confederate army knew his continual presence. Through the forest glades and across the hills resounded the trumpet-notes of the joyous-tempered cavalier as he galloped along the picket posts and sang the merry Confederate camp-songs to the accompaniment of Sweeney's banjo, or dashed at full speed through the bivouac of the infantry and shouted the wild refrain, "If you want to have a good time, jine the cavalry. Yours to count on, J. E. B. Stuart." Such was the signature of this bold Virginia knight who was the eye and the ear of Lee's army.

In two divisions of three brigades each was Stuart's corps of horsemen organized. The gallant Carolinian, Wade Hampton, rode at the head of the 1st division, and Fitzhugh Lee, nephew of the commanding general, led the 2d. In Hampton's division the brigade of Gordon came, altogether from the mountains of North Carolina. The brigade of Young was

¹ Compare footnote, p. 120. — EDITOR.

made up of South Carolinians and Georgians, and Rosser's brigade was gathered from Virginia. From Virginia also was mustered the entire division of Fitz Lee; his 2d and 3d brigades followed the banner of Lomax and Wickham, and the first was commanded by that worthy son of a noble sire, W. H. F. Lee.¹

In the opening days of May, Stuart held most of these swordsmen on the lower Rapidan and Rappahannock, guarding the Confederate right along the northern edge of that wilderness through whose dense thickets, like another Henry of Navarre, just twelve months before he had led the Confederate left wing to the charge and cheered Jackson's corps forward to the Chancellor House by singing with all the might of his tuneful mouth, "Old Joe Hooker, come out of the Wilderness." As Grant now made ready to advance, Stuart's couriers bore swift messages to Lee that multitudes of the Federal cavalry were swarming on the northern bank of the lower Rapidan. Lee knew that the hour of battle was at hand; he stood ready to spring upon the flank of his adversary as soon as the latter should entangle himself in the toils of the Wilderness. The 3d day of May, 1864, saw much burnishing of muskets in the Confederate camp. Letters were written and final farewells sent to the circles where love and tenderness kept watch at home. No advance rations were measured out in that encampment; no busy cookery scattered its noisy din among the houses of the soldiers. But the hungry began to talk of Federal provision trains as the

¹ Only in March, 1864, had "Rooney" [W. H. F. Lee] been exchanged. While a prisoner in Fort Monroe, under sentence of death on account of some retaliatory measure, his wife and two children were at the point of death. The husband and father asked permission to make the short journey to his Virginia plantation and speak a last farewell to his loved ones. This request was denied. His brother Custis, eldest son of General R. E. Lee, serving on the staff of President Davis, sent a flag of truce to the Federal authorities, asking to take his brother's place and die for him. But this also was refused. The spirit of the father glowed in the hearts of his sons. "Greater love hath no man than this."

possible spoil of battle, and comrade bade good-by to comrade and looked upon faces in other brigades which he might not see again.

General Lee began the duties of May 4 by issuing general order No. 38, repeating his previous commands to "prevent injury to fencing, crops, and other private property" during the approaching campaign. The war-horse was already snuffing the battle from afar. At 9 A. M. the signal flag on Clark's Mountain was waving the news to Lee's headquarters that Grant's tents were folded and his column in motion around the Confederate right flank across the Rapidan. At once was given the order to advance. On parallel roads leading a little east of a due southward course from the Rapidan was Grant moving his army in two columns. He was thrusting himself into the thickets of the Wilderness at a right angle to Lee's front line. Lee whirled instantly toward his own right flank, and turned his face eastward along two parallel roads that led him with the course of the Rapidan in perpendicular line against the right flank of Grant's long columns. At noontide on the 4th Ewell moved from the Palmyra Ford by the right flank eastward along the Orange Turnpike. At the same hour moved two of Hill's divisions from Orange Court House eastward toward Chancellorsville along the plank road two or three miles southward from Hill's advance on the turnpike.

As early as 11 A. M. Longstreet was ordering Field and Kershaw to follow a cross-country road that runs eastward from Gordonsville. But it was 4 P. M. when the two divisions fell into the line of march.

Lee had left Anderson's division of Hill's corps to guard his rear, and with 28,000 muskets under Hill and Ewell was making all speed to strike a blow at Grant's side as the latter sought to move across the Confederate right. The Confederate artillery moved to the front with the infantry column; Stuart was already making obstinate battle far in advance.

The Confederate commander rode with Hill's column on the plank roadway, and sent urgent messages to Longstreet to speed forward and support the Confederate right wing.

As the three columns of bronzed veterans press onward to deliver battle, we mark their eagerness for the coming strife. Confidence in their leader and in themselves reigns supreme. Two characteristics are stamped upon this army that follows Lee, — the deep religious faith of many and the buoyant good temper of all. In the ranks march ministers of the Gospel and laymen, who from youth have been devotees of the religious teachings handed down through pious ancestors from Knox, Cranmer, Wesley, and Bunyan. The labors of the chaplains during the winter on the Rapidan have been followed by a heightened religious devotion throughout the army. The piety of General Lee himself has reached as full a measure of religious devotion as was ever shown by Oliver Cromwell or Stonewall Jackson. Often is the commander found engaged in earnest prayer; constantly he asks for the prayers of his friends, and always does he ascribe his army's success to Providence. A veritable parallel to Cromwell's Ironsides is the Army of Northern Virginia in this Wilderness campaign when it wards off weariness by keeping step to the vocal music of psalms and hymns.

The unfailing good humor of the men upon the march is their only panacea for thirst, hunger, and weariness. "The Lord bless your dirty, ragged souls," was the greeting extended the army of scarecrows that followed Lee and Jackson into Maryland eighteen months before. Some of the same gray jackets still hang in shreds upon the Confederate infantry as they enter the Wilderness. But rags and hunger only furnish material for the spirit of jesting and of mirth. A lively fellow whistles an air, another chirps the fragment of a song, and all join in the chorus; then a slip in the mud, a peculiar cry or quaint jest sets an entire regiment into a roar of laughter. Then follows the hum and the buzz of a bewildering medley

of joking laughter and song that makes light the burden of the journey.¹

This lightness of spirit bears little fruit for preservation as wit and humor, but it is the most significant fact connected with Lee's army in the Wilderness. It indicates the superb *morale* of the Confederate troops. It is the sign of that cheerful endurance that carries the Army of Northern Virginia through the marching and starving and fighting of the fiercest campaign of the entire war. It follows them into battle. It marks them as they fight in the trenches. The men scarcely ever cease to laugh and jest and yell as they load and fire their muskets. We see this merriment and well-tempered buoyancy changed into the enthusiasm of a devoted soldiery when Lee gallops forward along Hill's column on the afternoon of May 4. Affection for their great leader breaks out in the tumult of wild cheers and the rolling of the battle-yell as they catch sight of their hero in the slouch hat and the suit of gray.

The evening of the 4th of May falls upon 100,000 soldiers of the Army of the Potomac south of the Rapidan. Hancock's corps (the 2d) has crossed at Ely's Ford and pitched camp for the night amid the wreckage of the field of Chancellorsville. He is three miles eastward from the Brock Road, and has thrown out Gregg's cavalry in advance. Warren's

¹ A young officer dashes along the roadside, partially adorned with a new outfit. "Come out of that hat!" is the familiar greeting of a thousand throats, one after another in quick succession. "Don't hide in that hat! come out!" is the refrain that greets him as he passes the next brigade. To another horseman a man in the ranks calls out, "Halloa, John, how 's your grandma?" "Halloa, Bill, here 's your brother," and thousands join in the cheerful salutation as the officer rides the gauntlet of the long column. A straggling foot-soldier makes inquiry after the regiment he has lost; a voice pipes out in reply, "Does your mother know you are out?" The long line breaks forth into a shout and a roar, and the lost soldier continues his search. Again, the infantry column pass a piece of artillery fast in the mud; the humor of the foot-soldiers breaks forth in mock heroics and good-natured wit at the expense of the cannoneers who are almost buried in the soft earth as they tug at the wheels.

corps, the 5th, has made passage at Germanna, and has moved on the Germanna Road to the Wilderness Tavern; Sedgwick has led the 6th corps behind the 5th, and his camp-fires are burning along the Germanna highway just south of the Rapidan. Cavalry vedettes keep watch at every path that looks westward toward Lee's position. Burnside's corps, the 9th, remains as yet on the northern bank of the river. Like a huge serpent is Grant's army outstretched in the Wilderness in a southeasterly course from the Rapidan to Jackson's last battle-ground. In the very heart of the dense forest-land between Orange Court House and Fredericksburg has Grant wedged the Army of the Potomac. Part of the Wilderness is a deserted mining region, the home of the whip-poor-will and the bat and the owl. Between the numerous creeks and rivulets are oak-covered ridges and knolls. The sweet-gum, the cedar, and the low pine lift their tops just above the dense undergrowth. Ravines bar the way, and the tangled thickets can be traversed only along the winding cow-paths. A few cleared fields offer space for the deployment of a regiment or a brigade. As night approaches, Grant calls the passage of the river "a great success," and declares that his apprehensions all have vanished. He telegraphs to Halleck: "Forty-eight hours will now demonstrate whether the enemy intends giving battle this side of Richmond." At the very same hour Ewell is in bivouac within one hour's march of Grant's right flank, ready to leap to battle in the jungle.

Through this district of matted shrubbery two roads nearly parallel to each other seek passage from Orange Court House eastward to Fredericksburg. The Orange Turnpike runs parallel to the Rapidan, and the Orange Plank Road lies a brief space further away from that stream. Along these same highways that Jackson used in his flank assault on Hooker and in the same direction with Stonewall's march is Lee now hurrying to deliver a flank attack against Grant. Lee also declares that his apprehensions have taken wings, and that he

has the Federal army in the position which he himself would select.

Lee is advancing with three columns *en échelon* against Grant's central and advanced corps. Ewell is foremost on the turnpike as he rushes across the intrenchments at Mine Run and pitches camp at Locust Grove and Robertson's Tavern; his advanced pickets stand on guard only three miles from the bivouac of Warren's 5th corps. Lee sets up his tent with Hill near Verdiersville in a roadside grove; he abides thus with his central column on the plank road. Farther to Hill's right and rear approaches Longstreet. Twelve miles has he marched from Gordonsville, and darkness finds him at Brock's Bridge on the Catharpin Road. Lee's troops are well in hand for the tiger spring of the morrow. At eight in the evening he sends courier to Ewell with orders to move forward at the dawning of the 5th of May, and expresses the strong desire "to bring him [enemy] to battle now as soon as possible."

A great chorus of forest birds greets the coming of the dawn of the 5th day of May as Lee sits to eat the scanty morning meal. His face beams with cheerfulness. He is communicative beyond his wonted habit. He passes pleasant jests at the expense of the staff. He openly gives expression to surprise that Grant has pushed himself into the same position occupied by Hooker just a year before, and he breathes the hope that the result may prove more disastrous to Grant. In such an issue to the combat he declares his perfect confidence. He then mounts horse and gallops to the head of Hill's column on the plank road. Just behind his own advanced pickets he rides when the skirmish opens with Grant's cavalry at Parker's Store. Far to the right front he can hear the carbines of his own cavalry column, and across the woods from the left come the brisk rattle of Ewell's sharpshooters. An occasional heavy gun sends its deep echo rolling backward from the line of Confederate advance. Lee is ready to strike

with his centre and left, but his own right wing is yet far afield.

Ewell leads the advance on the morning of the 5th along the turnpike. But Longstreet has not yet reported presence on the right, and at 8 A. M. Lee instructs Ewell (left wing) to regulate his march by Hill (centre), whose progress along the plank road may be marked by the firing at the head of Hill's column. At the same time Lee prefers not "to bring on a general engagement" before the arrival of Longstreet. A general battle he means to have, but his plan now contemplates brisk skirmishing to hold the Army of the Potomac in its present position until he can swing his centre and right wing against Grant's advanced corps.

Ewell advances slowly in readiness for action. Johnson's division leads the column, and J. M. Jones's brigade marches to the front. The Federal pickets and skirmishers fall back before the vigor of Jones until the latter at 11 A. M. catches sight of Warren's column crossing the turnpike and pressing southward on the Germanna Road. Jones is greatly in advance of Hill, and his attack has brought him face to face with Grant's regular line of battle. At the same hour to Ewell comes Lee's repetition of the order, "No general engagement" until Longstreet shall reach the field. From his central position with Hill, Lee holds his two columns in check waiting for the 1st corps. The Confederate soldiers are like war-dogs straining at the leash, eager for battle with their old antagonists.

In advance of the main column on the plank road, Lee, Hill, and Stuart ride forward beyond Parker's Store and pause under the trees in the edge of an old field. Grant's skirmishers break like a blue cloud from the grove of pines to the eastward, but the line of gray jackets leaps forward to the charge. In the very forefront, along the plank road, Poague pushes his guns. The yells of the Confederates and the roll of their musketry tell Lee that a stronger line must

press forward, and now he sends Heth's division to hold the crest of the ridge in the edge of the forest. Just as Heth moves to the front, the music of regular battle comes from the left. The crash of rifle volleys, the deep roar of a few scattered batteries, the occasional report of a Parrott gun, and the stirring cadence of the Confederate yell warn Lee that Ewell has found Grant's full line of battle. The sun is already sloping his course toward the west — and still Longstreet tarries.

If we recall the hour of noon on Ewell's front, we find him ordering the adventurous Jones to "fall back slowly if pressed." This is Ewell's obedience to Lee's injunctions against general battle. Therefore Jones withdraws the heavy guns which stand in front with his skirmishers. This retirement of artillery in the turnpike invites Griffin's division of Warren's corps into strong attack upon the Confederate brigade. The line of Jones is broken and driven back over the dead body of the brave brigadier. But Ewell will no farther retire. He gives the word, and forward rush the brigades of Daniel and Gordon to pour a musketry fire into Griffin's front and flanks. Griffin's column is crushed. Still onward press the Confederates through the undergrowth until they catch the flank of the two Federal divisions of Crawford and Wadsworth. These have become entangled in the forest glade and speedily go down before the Southern woodsmen. Four Federal guns and several hundred Federal prisoners become Ewell's spoil. At close range now each line of battle begins to make its position strong with breastworks of logs and earth. Sedgwick has brought his 6th corps into touch with Warren's right. Ewell stands blocking the advance of both the 5th and 6th Federal corps. The entire Confederate left wing is deployed in line across the turnpike facing Warren and Sedgwick, who hold the Germanna Road. In Ewell's centre stands Johnson; Ewell's left is held by Early, while the right division under Rodes extends itself southward

through the tangled forest to touch elbows with the left of Hill's corps.

From the plank road, where Lee's eye keeps watch, arises the roar of desperate battle about the hour when Ewell is counting his prisoners and making stronger his line on the left. In the opening strife at this point Heth has led the attack from Lee's centre; he has struck Warren's head of column under Crawford and has driven it back. As Crawford recoils toward the turnpike, his line is caught in flank by Ewell's charge; but Getty of Sedgwick's corps reaches the junction of the Plank and Brock roads, and against Getty rushes Heth's line of battle.

It would seem that Grant has not expected battle in the Wilderness. His order of march for the morning of the 5th of May has bidden Hancock advance the 2d corps to Shady Grove Church, has ordered Warren to bring the 5th corps as far as Parker's Store, and Sedgwick to lead the 6th to Wilderness Tavern. The huge serpent seeks to crawl forward and thrust its head outside the Wilderness to the southward. At 11 A. M. Hancock finds himself at Todd's Tavern southward from the plank road; a gap of ten miles has he left between the 2d corps and the 5th and 6th, which are now compelled to halt and face the thunderbolts of war moving eastward on the parallel roadways. At 11 A. M. Hancock turns his face back over his morning pathway and hastens to aid Getty in the defense of the Brock Road. But it is 2 P. M. before Hancock's head of column begins to assist Getty in the work of erecting fortifications along the Brock Road, facing Lee on the plank road.

That space of three hours from eleven until two marks the passing of a rare opportunity. "What can delay General Longstreet?" The crimson flush is on Lee's brow, and every vein in the temple is swollen with the hot blood of the fury of battle. The commander rides up and down his line, his quiet dignity scarce concealing the anxious eagerness of the moment

as he longs for the 1st corps. With those 10,000 men he might rush between the divided wings of Grant's army and in this tangle of narrow pathways hold one portion at bay while he makes assault upon the other. But Longstreet comes not. Far to the rear of Lee's right, beyond the plank road he plods along, misses the way, retraces his steps, and reaches not the field of war.

On the Brock Road Hancock makes ready his corps for battle. Behind the first line of breastworks he piles up logs and earth as a second intrenchment and behind the centre of this second defense he erects a third.

In front of Hancock's threefold line of logs, Heth's men build at first only a slight defense across the turnpike; the line is in horseshoe shape, behind the crest of a slight elevation in the midst of a dense growth of young trees. But beyond this intrenchment advance the skirmishers in force, and in the open forest 300 yards from the Brock Road, they await the coming of Hancock's corps. Wilcox has sent brigades to the right and to the left to strengthen Heth's flanks and to keep in touch with the right flank of Ewell's corps. Poague's battalion of heavy guns is forward with the foremost, ready to defend the roadway. The other heavy guns cannot reach the scene of strife and nearly all are silent.

At 4.30 Hancock's corps moves to the attack, strengthened by Getty's division in the centre and Wadsworth moving forward on the right. At once the forest is ablaze with the flame of musketry. The music of deadly combat begins its fierce roar. In the dark woods the two lines of men approach each other until almost in personal touch. As the night falls upon the grim wrestlers, they can aim only at the flashing of the opposing muskets, not one hundred feet away.

At 4.30 the battle is joined, and at 7 it still rages in all its fury. Heth's men behind the intrenched crest of the ridge can hear the moaning of the leaden hail that passes above their heads. That Federal musketry fire cuts off the forest of

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saplings "four and five feet above the ground" as regularly as if cut by a machine. With laughter, jokes, and general cheerfulness, the Confederates lie prone upon the ground, and with deliberate aim scatter havoc among the men in blue. The smoke of battle settles down like a thick cloud. The two lines fire and yell like demons in this hell on earth.

Along the entire Confederate line the smoke and roar of battle cannot smother the sound of the "rebel yell." When the Federal force is massed against Lee's right, he sends swift message to Ewell to capture Wilderness Tavern Ridge and cut off Grant from his base. Ewell takes the aggressive and sends two brigades straight into the centre of Sedgwick's corps, and stands ready to follow up the charge. But Sedgwick is too strong in his house of logs, and Ewell must abide behind his own works.¹

On Lee's right centre a savage counter-charge by Heth makes capture of Ricketts's battery, but again the guns are lost to the Federal regiments. Hill's right is pushed by Wilcox around Hancock's flank, and two Federal brigades (Mott's 1st and 2d) are driven to the rear. Hancock makes "repeated and desperate assaults" [the testimony of Lee], but the Confederates are unyielding. Rosser's cavalry on Lee's right drives back the Federal cavalry and artillery. A heavy tribute in blood has Lee exacted from Grant, and as deep darkness covers over the weird and dismal field of wounds and death Lee can send dispatch to Richmond that all is yet well. "By the blessing of God, we maintained our position against every effort until night, when the contest closed."

The tardy Longstreet has made only a twelve-mile advance eastward during the entire day, May 5, and halts at Richards's shop on the Catharpin Road, miles away from Lee's field of action. At 8 p. m. Lee sends courier to Longstreet and bids him make a night march to relieve his battled-wearied men.

¹ Three to one do the Federal forces outnumber Ewell on the Confederate left.

At the same hour he gives Hill the promise that his soldiers shall be relieved at the coming of dawn. The commander seeks rest upon the ground just behind his own hungry and thirsty veterans. Already has he ordered Ewell to make early assault on the 6th of May with the left wing of the Confederate army. His plans are laid to push Longstreet and Anderson's division of Hill's corps, at daybreak, in full offensive battle against Grant's left and centre.

Hill's worn-out soldiers sleep on the ground where they have fought. No food passes their lips. They take no care to strengthen the slight, irregular breastworks, for Longstreet's men are under orders to march and take Hill's position. One hour after midnight Longstreet's corps breaks camp and follows the special guide toward the battle-ground. As the forest birds again announce the dawn, Ewell opens fierce fire along the Confederate left wing before 5 A. M. Lee has taken up again the part of the aggressor. Warren and Sedgwick make reply to Ewell's firing, and then from left to right along the entire Confederate line the musketry battle begins its deadly work.

During this night has Burnside led his 20,000 across the Rapidan, and Grant has ordered his four army corps to make assault "along the whole line" at five in the morning. Hancock leads nearly one half the Army of the Potomac against Lee's right, and Burnside moves forward to pierce the Confederate centre.

Before the dawning is the hour set by Lee for Longstreet's arrival. Hill expects to be withdrawn, and is not prepared for battle. But Hancock's assault upon Hill's front is met with obstinate courage; Hill's centre does not yield. Wadsworth's fresh division has spent the night in touch with Hill's left flank. Hancock's brigades swarm around to Hill's right and attack the flank and rear of Wilcox. The Confederate line is rolled up and driven backward. Desperately do the men of Hill contend for their field, delivering fierce fire as

they retreat. Close and savage is the fight, but Lee's right wing is broken. One hour after the first shot, Hill has been forced upon Poague's battalion of artillery that stands defiant near the roadway. Hancock dares not pass Poague's grape and canister. Just behind the guns is Lee on horseback. "Why does not General Longstreet come?" he continually says to his staff as he rides to and fro to rally the brigades of Hill's corps.

From the Confederate left wing come the sounds of heavy battle. Ewell has made his log-works to bristle with cannon and heaps disaster upon every assault by Warren and Sedgwick. But at last Lee's counter-stroke against Hancock's assault is prepared to fall. In closed ranks and in double column, advancing in a long trot down the plank road, rushes Longstreet's corps, Field's division on the left, side by side with Kershaw's division on the right.

Already is the sun beaming upon the awful game of death; in the morning light the forest wears the smile of the spring-tide; the birds in the treetops are singing while the tempest of wrath breaks below. The thunder of Poague's guns shakes the very earth. Lee rides forward to meet the head of Field's division. "What boys are these?" he asks. "Texas boys," is the quick reply from the brigade that once followed Hood, but is now led by Gregg. The light of battle is shining in Lee's deep, luminous eyes, as he calls out, "My Texas boys, you must charge!" The Confederates go fairly wild when they see before them the gray-bearded man with the gray slouch hat. The voices of the 800 Texans are hoarse with joy, and their blood takes fire as they hear Lee himself give the order to charge. Up go ragged caps into the air as the veterans rend the sky with their wild yell. Then the line of battle is formed, and forward they advance beyond the batteries against Hancock. Immediately behind the line rides Lee to direct the charge in person. "Charge, boys!" is Lee's deep, thrilling call as he advances into the thickest of the fight. Suddenly

the men divine his desperate purpose, and they begin to shout, "Mars Robert, go back!" "Go back, General Lee!" Then the artillerymen whom Lee has passed respond with the answering call, "Come back, come back, General Lee!" Lee rides onward, waving his old gray hat, but the very heavens are rent with the cry, "Lee to the rear! Lee to the rear!" A tall, lank Texas sergeant in gray rags moves from the ranks, seizes the bridle-rein, and turns Traveller's head to the rear. A look of disappointment crosses the face of Lee, but he yields. A last earthly salute the entire line waves to the commander, and forward they sweep to meet the advancing Federals. At the same time a part of Poague's battalion moves forward with cannon. "Good-bye, boys!" cry the advancing gunners to the comrades left behind. *Morituri salutamus*—we who are about to die salute you. Such is the spirit of the veterans who face the storm of death that is breaking upon them. At the head of the return charge dash the Texans. They are the heroes of Cold Harbor, Second Manassas, Sharpsburg, and Round Top. At the very head of the Federal column massed in the plank road, the brigade flings itself. The ceaseless fury of the Federal fire is pouring into front and flanks. To right of them, to left of them, in front of them, muskets and cannon volley and thunder. Into the jaws of death, into the mouth of hell, charge the 800. A circle of fire envelops the band, but already the Federal column staggers. Benning and Anderson, with their Georgians, and Law, leading his Alabamians, crash forward against the encircling host. The forest rings with yells, the roar of battle becomes terrific. Half of the Texas brigade has fallen within ten minutes. But the tide of Federal success has been turned backward by the gallant men who have shown their willingness to meet death and to spare their beloved leader.

Lee's counter-stroke now is ready. Three guns are thrown forward with the infantry on the highway; Field deploys to

the left and Kershaw to the right of the plank road. The conflict sweeps to and fro in the tangled woods and marshes. The crisis in the Battle of the Wilderness has come.

Lee waits behind his field battery for the arrival of Anderson's division of Hill's corps. The fight is raging in his front. The guns of Ewell are calling across from the turnpike that all is well on the left wing. An engineer is sent to find an opening for a flank attack against Hancock's left. At this moment of anxiety a courier—a mere lad—dashes up to General Lee with a message from Anderson, leader of the division left to guard the rear at Orange Court House. The courier's small pony is panting like a hunted deer. Lee reads the message and turns to look upon the tired pony. "Young man," he says, "you should have some feeling for your horse; dismount and rest him." Lee thereupon draws forth from the bag attached to his saddle a buttered biscuit, and half of this, with his own hand, he gives to the courier's pony.

Now Anderson comes to give strength to Lee's onset. Hill's men return to the front. At 10 A. M. Longstreet moves four brigades under Mahone by the right flank. They find a covered way in an unfinished railroad that brings them to the left end of Hancock's regiments. Facing north they fall with fury upon Hancock's flank and rear and roll up the Federal line of battle. At eleven Lee pushes every man forward against Hancock's front in impetuous charge. The Federal brigades are forced backward in confusion.¹

The descriptions given are these: "Broken into fragments"—"overlapped"—"crushed"—"driven back"—"crumbling away under fire." Hancock's entire left wing is "rolled up like a wet blanket" [Hancock's own admission to Longstreet after the war] and broken into fragments—Hill's left brigade "is struck on end, broken into fragments, and hurled back in dire disorder." The next brigade is "overlapped, crushed, and driven back." Next, Mott's division "crumbled away" under the fire; Wadsworth's division on Hill's left is "staggered by the terrific onslaught." "Down the plank road from Hill's centre a stream of broken men is pouring to the rear, giving the

Twelve o'clock finds Grant's entire left wing in confusion, with Hancock giving the order to retreat behind the strong works on the plank road. Like a lion of war, Longstreet is charging in front and on the flank. Grant's losses have been enormous and not even the attack of the tardy Burnside can retrieve the disaster.

Now the blaze of muskets has ignited the dried leaves, and the smoke obscures the noonday glow. Longstreet's regiments are ablaze with the ardor of battle. The gallant Georgian places himself at the head of Kershaw's division and sets it in charging line across the plank road. In hot pursuit of Hancock he moves rapidly toward the eastward, nor does he note the fact that his four flanking brigades have made pause in line just southward from the plank roadway. Their loaded muskets are pointing northward to command the very avenue upon which Longstreet rides. In full volley they fire upon the general and his staff. The brave Brigadier Jenkins falls dead and Longstreet is disabled. Friends call out, the firing ceases; but the advance of the flanking force is checked. Lee hastens to the front and seeks to straighten out his line of battle. The hour of four o'clock has struck when the order is given to charge through forest, flame, and smoke upon the Brock Road. Before this hour Burnside has raised a storm against the Confederate centre, but Hill's troops already have tamed the fury of the 9th corps. As Burnside becomes quiet in the centre, Lee makes ready to deliver assault against both flanks of the Army of the Potomac. Ewell sends Early and Gordon to envelop Sedgwick's right flank at the very hour when Lee urges the men of Longstreet and Hill to the charge against Hancock's triple

onlooker the impression that everything had gone to pieces" [Walker]. Webb says: "Ewell had most effectively stopped the forward movement of the right wing of Meade's army and Hill and Longstreet defeated our left under Hancock. The fact is that the whole of the left was disorganized." Wadsworth's division to right of Hancock's is driven by the Confederate tempest into disorder and they retreat over the fallen body of their brave leader.

wall of defense. The forest has communicated its fire to the front line of Federal logs. Forward rush the divisions of Field and Anderson. They pour in a hot musketry fire, but Hancock's second line is bristling with heavy guns, and their fire sweeps the field. Up to the very breastwork on Hancock's left the Confederates advance, and a gap is made and disorder reigns among the Federal defenders, who turn in flight. The Confederate flag is planted in triumph on Hancock's first intrenchment, but his second and third walls are impregnable. The Federal artillery is aided by Carroll's brigade, and the Confederates are compelled to loosen their grasp on Hancock's fortress.

The sun is yet above the horizon, and Gordon is ready for the charge against Grant's extreme right. Two Confederate brigades beyond the turnpike are facing southward; their bayonets are pointing directly along Grant's line of battle. Forward they move to the music of the far-resounding yell. Sedgwick's right brigade is engaged in the busy work of piling log upon log, but the men lay down the axe and the spade and join their brigadier as prisoners of war. The second brigade is likewise rolled up and broken, and a second brigadier is captured. Darkness falls upon Gordon in possession of a mile of Grant's rifle-pits, 600 prisoners, and Generals Shaler and Seymour. The dense thickets have disordered the Confederate line, and Gordon halts. The 6th corps spends the night in drawing back its front and right to a line of defense entirely new along the Germanna Road.¹

The awful struggle in the tangled forest has closed with Lee pressing the attack against Grant's right and left. As this second day fades into darkness, the Army of the Potomac is struggling in a purely defensive contest, and holds its position behind these heavy walls of log-work on the left, and draws back its right corps behind a second freshly constructed line

Grant writes, May 7, 10 A. M.: "Had there been daylight, the enemy could have injured us very much in the confusion that prevailed."

on the right, and with Grant ordering Burnside to make his position strong in the centre.

When Grant looks through the thickets on the morning of the 7th of May, he sees Lee's breastworks crowned with heavy guns, and has no desire to renew the battle. Likewise Lee beholds the strength of Grant's intrenchments, and does not attack. A cavalry battle is in progress this day to the southward. Fitz-Lee on the Brock Road and Hampton on the Catharpin oppose the troopers of Sheridan.

If the casualties suffered in battle are an indication of success or failure, we may place the 17,000 Federal disabled men (regular reports; Humphreys, 15,387) in contrast with the probable Confederate loss of less than half that number.¹

Grant's early order of May 7 commands Meade to make ready for a night march to Spottsylvania Court House. Hancock must hold his ground, while Warren leads the 5th southward along the Brock Road and Sedgwick eastward to Chancellorsville and thence to Piney Branch Church; Burnside eastward to Chancellorsville and thence southward. Two corps draw back from before the face of Lee toward the east, while two remain in his front.

All day long both Grant and Meade are troubled with anxious fear of an attack from the Confederate army. The purpose now formed in Grant's mind finds expression the following day in a dispatch to Washington: "My efforts will be to form a junction with General Butler as early as possible, and be prepared to meet any enemy interposing. . . . My exact route to the James River I have not yet definitely marked out." We hear no longer the command to Meade to seek Lee's army as his objective point, but Grant turns toward Butler on the distant James.

Early on the morning of May 7, Lee orders a roadway cut through the forest directly southward from the plank

¹ Compare footnote, p. 120. — EDITOR.

road. He seems to anticipate Grant's movement from the latter's failure to renew the battle. The cavalry soon brings the news that Grant's trains are moving off. Ewell sends a force to reconnoitre the Federal right, and finds the Germanna Road deserted.

Grant is withdrawing from his defenses, and behind him remain his dead and some of his wounded.

At the coming of darkness Lee issues the order to Anderson to lead the 1st corps as soon as practicable through the new forest pathway to Spottsylvania Court House. Ewell is next ordered to begin the night march, and Hill remains to guard the rear. Anderson moves out at 11 P. M. of May 7, and through the Wilderness, lit up by burning leaves, he moves southward. In a shady grove near Spottsylvania Court House the men of the 1st corps halt and lie down to snatch an hour's rest and await the coming of the dawn. Lee himself bivouacs at Parker's Store with Ewell, and awakes on the 8th of May to move with Ewell's corps toward Spottsylvania.

Grant has now left the Wilderness behind him; so many of his brigades at first move eastward toward Chancellorsville away from Lee's presence that the Confederate commander conceives the view on this morning of the 8th that Grant is retiring to Fredericksburg. He therefore leaves Early with Heth's corps in front of Todd's Tavern to hold the position of Grant's rear, while he swings two corps around by his own right flank to strike Grant's head of column or his flank. Lee's movement is executed with great skill.

Grant remains with Hancock near his own rear, and until 12.45 P. M. of the 8th issues detailed orders to his army for the advance beyond Spottsylvania to the James River. At 1 P. M. he learns that his head of column, 5th corps, has received a check at Spottsylvania, and that he must stand and deliver battle. Lee has learned in the early forenoon that the Confederate advance corps has won the race for position

and holds the coveted field of defensive battle on Spottsylvania Ridge.

Chiefly to Fitz-Lee's division of Stuart's cavalry is due the praise for gaining the midnight race. The report of Warren declares that his 5th corps was retarded in the southward movement on the Brock Road, first, by the cavalry escort of General Meade; secondly, by Merritt's Federal cavalry that blocked the way. Small mention is made of the presence of that ever-serious obstacle to the progress of a Federal column, viz., Stuart's troopers. Throughout the night has Fitz-Lee held his dismounted men to hot work on the Brock Road against the advance of Warren. Trees are felled, attacks delivered, and obstinate resistance in narrow pathways made. The sun rises upon Warren still distant from the goal, while Kershaw's men of Anderson's corps are resting at the Court House from the weariness of a journey more circuitous and hence longer than that of Warren. The Confederates drive out a wandering body of Federal troopers, then march northward over the Brock Road to render aid to the cavalry in stemming the Federal tide of war. On a ridge covered with pines a mile from the Court House, Anderson constructs a breastwork of logs and rails. The Confederates wear a grim smile behind their defenses as they watch Warren's corps advancing to the assault. Onward rushes the Federal host to the charge. Stuart is there on horseback, amid the infantrymen. He has led Anderson's column on the march. The ascending sun glances for the last time upon that plumed hat in the presence of the Army of Northern Virginia. Amid the storm of bullets, Stuart wears the same sweet smile. He laughs and makes exchange of jokes with the riflemen; he commends the accuracy of their aim and the rapidity of their fire. They have marched all the night long, but unquenchable is the good humor and the courage of Stuart and these musketeers. His shout of gratification is mingled with theirs when they behold Warren's corps recoiling from the deadly fire

that blazes along the ridge's crest. Just once again three days after shall we see the gallant Stuart on the line of battle and then — no more. Lee's 1st corps holds the Court House cross-roads, and Grant's advance has failed to take the position.

The position is a slightly elevated ridge partly covered with pine-trees and dotted with open farms. The elevation is intersected by rivulets and ravines along the eastern and western slopes. The two armies are shaping their course southeastward across the swamps and sluggish streams that feed the upper York River. Between the two rivers lies the Spottsylvania Ridge in this same southeastward direction. Along the western edge of the elevation flows the Po, and at the eastern base is the Ny. Across the peninsular ridge are drawn the embattled lines that face each other on the morning of the 8th of May. Lee's guns are pointing northward; fairly across Grant's pathway has the Confederate commander planted his line of battle. The swifter marching of the night has given him the elevated field, and now must the Army of the Potomac deliver battle against an intrenched foe.

Lee makes more speedy concentration on the 8th than Grant, because of Early's threatening attitude at Todd's Tavern. The Confederate commander rides through the dust and heat of the day with Ewell's corps, and at 5 P. M., by a flanking course beyond the Po, has twice made passage of that stream, and near sunset looks northward from the ridge of pines. Lee's 1st and 2d corps are ready in position to receive the charge of Sedgwick as he leads southward the 5th and 6th of the Army of the Potomac. To the left of the Brock Road stands Anderson, and on the right moves Ewell to battle, facing northward to receive the charge. As darkness falls, the assault of Sedgwick is driven back, and Ewell advances in a counter-charge a half mile on the right of the Brock Road. Face to face with Sedgwick's breastworks he finds himself. The Confederate corps is halted, and in the darkness the

men throw up intrenchments where they stand. We are now watching the formation of the famous salient; let us take careful notice of positions.

Ewell's corps forms Lee's right wing on the evening of the 8th, and Anderson's corps is Lee's left wing. The Brock Road separates the two forces. The division of Rodes rests its left on the Brock Road, and Johnson's division is drawn out to the right of Rodes. Gordon holds his division in reserve. The half-mile movement forward has brought Ewell's advance divisions far northward beyond Anderson's corps. Lee's entire right wing faces westward while his left wing faces northward, both guarding the approach of the Brock Road from the northwest.

The early morning of the 9th of May finds Lee riding along Ewell's line on the Confederate right wing. Through the pine-tree groves it winds and curves its way just where the men have halted in the darkness. As Lee continues to ride toward his right, he finds the line turning almost northward toward Sedgwick's flank. Johnson's division, on the extreme right, has pushed its way through the forest, across rivulets and through a tangled marsh beyond the Harrison and McCool farmhouses, to command the open ground that slopes away to the Ny River on the eastward. At Rodes's right brigade, the line bends outward in a salient, and in the centre of Johnson's division an acute angle in the line is formed by bending back his right brigade to face the Ny and defend the right wing from a flank attack.

As Lee glances along the irregular intrenchment, he exclaims: "This is a wretched line. I do not see how it can be held!"

But Ewell calls attention to the fact that Johnson's salient commands a high open point on the Spottsylvania Ridge that must be held, since Grant's cannon from that point would sweep the field. Lee orders his heavy guns into strong position behind his entire defenses, and commands the chief

engineer to mark off a second line behind the advanced right wing cutting off the salients. Gordon's division makes a slight beginning in this second line.

Thus far have we seen the construction of the western face of the great salient, where nearly all of Ewell's men stand with their backs to the eastward and watch the Brock Road.

Far behind at Todd's Tavern on the Brock Road has Hancock's corps, except one division, tarried throughout the 8th of May. Grant fears an attack from Lee's rear guard, composed of Hampton and of Hill's corps (under Early). He therefore keeps Hancock from the field during those golden hours when the Confederate intrenchments rise inch by inch. On the morning of the 9th Grant sends Sheridan on a cavalry raid toward Richmond, and thus gives Lee a longer time to concentrate.

While Ewell and Anderson bar Grant's progress southward between the rivers, Hill's corps under Early hastens toward the field. The head of the 3d corps reaches the Court House just in time to resist the advance of Burnside across the river Ny from the eastward. Far afield has Burnside marched, and now along the Fredericksburg Road he moves to strike Lee's right and rear. Along the ridge, Early faces his line toward the east, and visits confusion on Burnside's attack. Early's left extends northward to touch Ewell's right, and now the great salient in Lee's line is completed. It thrusts its head northward along the Spottsylvania Ridge; the western face is held by Ewell and the eastern face by Ewell and Early. Lee's right wing now forms a right angle with his left and centre. At the angle the Confederate line is pushed out northward into the shape of an acorn, one mile in length and half a mile in width. The Confederate soldiers call this excrescence the Mule Shoe. Along the eastern face of the salient is first an open field, sloping to the Ny River, then two small streams are crossed, and the line of battle climbs northward to the summit of a gentle knoll. Upon this knoll the

rifle-pits, filled with Johnson's division, make a sharp angle to the southward and wind through the heavy pine-trees to form the westward face of the salient. Lee is ready for battle. Heavy guns sweep every approach toward this exposed angle in the centre, and the right and left wing are made strong with artillery.

Hancock follows the Brock Road on May 9 to take position on Grant's extreme right. He sends three divisions across the Po to press against Lee's left and rear. Grant proposes to grasp Lee's peninsula from the north front and from the east and the west.

Under cover of darkness Lee makes ready his counter-stroke. Across the Po below the Court House he moves Heth's division. At daylight of the 10th Heth falls upon the flank and rear of Hancock's force, just as Hancock seeks to obey Grant's order to withdraw his men across the Po. Amid the thick-grown pines Heth visits fearful loss on Barlow's division; through an *Inferno* of burning woods he hastens Hancock's retreat across the Po and rejoices over the capture of one of Hancock's heavy guns.

Now Grant begins to storm the Confederate works on the ridge. At eleven he moves a line of battle against Field's division in a grand assault, but the Federal soldiers pour out their blood in vain. At three in the afternoon the men in blue uniforms make a second dash against the wooded crest where the guns and muskets of Lee's 1st corps are hurling a tornado of death through the stunted cedars. Over the works leap the Confederates to gather up the muskets and ammunition and haversacks of Grant's fallen men. These are distributed along the line, and now each Confederate is armed with more than one loaded rifle. The sun draws near the hour of setting. Hancock is joined with Warren, and in long heavy lines the 2d and 5th corps dash themselves against Lee's thin left wing. But Hancock's front line goes down before the multiplied fire of the Confederate division. Gallantly onward

rushes the second Federal line and over the breastwork of the Texas brigade. Like tigers fight the fragment of the 800. With bayonets and with clubbed guns they carry on the struggle hand to hand, and will not yield to numbers. The adjoining brigade turns upon the flank of the Federal column, and Grant's assault is rendered fruitless.

At the same hour another assault is raging against the west face of the salient. Sedgwick sends Upton's brigade to charge Ewell's centre. In four lines Upton advances and surprises a part of Ewell's line; he breaks through Doles' brigade and sweeps him from the Confederate works. Daniel and Steuart unleash their brigades (North Carolinians and Virginians) against Upton's flanks. Battle draws up his Alabamians and Johnson his North Carolinians against Upton's front, and yet the gallant Upton continues the struggle. Lee hears the sound of continued battle near the centre of his field; the message comes that Ewell's line is broken. He spurs his horse toward the place of strife, and finds Gordon arranging his men for the charge. Lee moves forward to lead the regiments. "This is no place for General Lee," says Gordon in stage whisper. The soldiers hear the words and begin to shout, "General Lee to the rear!" "These men are Georgians and Virginians; they have never failed you; they will not fail you now!" cries the impetuous Gordon to his commander. And now a ragged soldier steps from the ranks and turns Traveller's head toward the rear. The cry of "Lee to the rear!" rings out again and again, and then it changes to the battle-slogan as the line advances. Gordon strikes Upton on the right flank just as the Stonewall brigade delivers its blow on the Federal left flank. Upton is forced back with heavy loss and the line restored. Ewell's terrific firing has meanwhile repulsed the reinforcements pressing forward to the aid of Upton.

The Confederate right wing facing eastward under Early has not escaped attack on this day of general advance.

Several lines from Burnside's corps essay to seize the venerable Court House, but the guns of Cutts and Pegram speedily drive Burnside to cover.

This day of Federal sacrifice is followed by a day of rain and skirmishing. May 10 Grant wires to Halleck:¹ "Send to Belle Plain all the infantry you can rake and scrape." May 11 he dispatches² to Washington the well-known declaration that he will "fight it out on this line if it takes all summer," and adds to this the following: "The arrival of reinforcements here will be very encouraging to the men, and I hope they will be sent as fast as possible, and in as great numbers."

From the upper windows of the brick church near the Court House the Confederates possess a wide view over the field of strife. May 11 they mark commotion and movement on the Federal line. Burnside turns his head of column northward across the Ny, and then marches back again to sit down before the Court House. Far up the Po toward Lee's left marches a Federal brigade, and Hancock withdraws a division from the Federal right. Lee interprets this restlessness as the sign of a withdrawal from the field by the Army of the Potomac. He orders all artillery "difficult of access" on the Confederate line to be withdrawn and held in readiness for the march. In obedience to this command, Long draws back through the narrow winding roadway the guns from the Mule Shoe salient. Johnson's division is left to guard the apex with muskets and two pieces of artillery. At midnight Johnson reports the massing of troops in his front, and asks for the return of the guns. Early thinks that Grant will assail the Confederate left; Johnson insists that the Confederate centre will be attacked. Ewell orders the guns returned at daybreak of the 12th.

Through the heavy mist at the dawn of May 12 Hancock's corps dashes from the pines across the open front to envelop

¹ 68 W. R. 595.

² *Ibid.* 627.

the apex of the salient. Johnson's division is alert, but the musketry fire cannot shake the masses of the 2d corps. Over the log-works they swarm; Johnson's division of 2800 is made captive, and in bonds with them are borne off Generals Johnson and Steuart. The Confederate batteries rush forward at a gallop, and reach the salient just in time to become Federal spoil. Twenty cannon and a troop of banners fall into Hancock's hands.

Hancock's corps fills up the inner angle of the salient. His line begins to sweep down within the Mule Shoe from point to heel. Lane's Confederate brigade from the eastern face pours in a galling fire, and Hancock's left wing recoils. Across the base of the salient Gordon forms his line. So dense is the fog and smoke of battle that Hancock's position is defined only by the sound of his muskets and the direction of the bullets. Like a primitive bee-hunter Gordon follows the course of the leaden messengers back to their origin. The din of battle swells into a roar where Gordon meets Hancock amid the thickest pines. The Federal left is thrust backward, some of the Confederate guns recaptured and afterwards lost again, and Gordon sets his flag above the eastern face of the salient.

Already has Lee galloped to the place of battle. He watches Hancock's left swing back, but observes the Federal right still making advance. Now Ewell begins to press Ramseur's brigade against Hancock's right flank. From Hill's (Early's) corps on Lee's right are drawn two brigades under Harris and McGowan. Some of Perrin's men follow. Lee spurs his horse forward to lead Harris's Mississippians into the deadly breach. But again rings out the protest, "General Lee, go to the rear!" "Lee to the rear" is the battle-cry of the line that drives backward Hancock's right wing. Severe losses have come to Hancock's corps. Outside the salient have the Confederates driven his line. But Hancock continues to hold the outer trenches at the apex and along the western face of the

Mule Shoe. Two divisions from the 6th Federal corps advance to support Hancock's right along this western portion of the angle. Three Confederate brigades occupy the inner trenches of this western side. Across the pile of logs for twenty hours the murderous struggle continues hand-to-hand, until this place of battle is baptized, in the life current from the veins of wounded and dying, as the Bloody Angle. Mississippi under Harris holds the place of honor on this day. In close support stands South Carolina, led by McGowan, and by their side stands North Carolina, with Ramseur. These three brigades hold the inner trenches of the western face of the salient. From the apex at their right sweeps an enfiling Federal fire along their line. Just across the heap of logs in the outer trenches stand the Federal divisions, four lines deep.

The three brigades must hold this key-point in the Confederate archway. Lee has not another man to place in the imperiled centre, for Grant is hurling the whole Army of the Potomac against him "all along the line." The 5th and part of the 6th corps are charging up against Lee's left, and Burnside storms the right. But cannon crown the Confederate lines, and the story of Grant's assaults is again written in the blood of his own soldiers. Continual aid is sent to Hancock in the centre. Ravines and forests outside the salient are filled up with Federal regiments; batteries are planted to fire over the works; mortars drop their shot among the beleaguered Confederates; cannon are dragged up to thrust their muzzles across the top of the intrenchments. And yet the three brigades stand bravely to their work.

On each side of the fortification men climb upward to the top and fire into the faces of the foe. They grapple one another across the logs, and the strongest drags his antagonist over the top-log as a prisoner. Over the works and through the crevices are bayonets thrust. A cold, drenching rain falls upon the wrestlers. Both trenches are partly filled with water and seem to run with blood. The heaps of dead and dying,

Federal and Confederates, are more than once removed, to leave fighting room for the living. Large standing trees behind the lines are cut off by musket-balls.

Throughout the day the roar of battle is continuous in this field of blood. The brigades ordered forward by Grant to support the assault suffer more, perhaps, than the Federal force in the trenches. The Confederate fire is so keen that it splits the blades of grass around the approaching lines from the 6th corps. A Federal officer speaks of the "miniés moaning in a furious concert as they picked out victims by the score."

Under cover of darkness Grant's line of toilers in the ditch is relieved by men who take their places.¹ As these Federal soldiers withdraw, they drop to the ground from exhaustion. But the three Confederate brigades are not relieved. Lee cannot spare the men to take their places. Without food or drink or rest or covering, beneath the falling rain they stand in the bloody trenches and load and fire throughout the watches of the night.

Gordon's men are toiling to erect a breastwork across the breast of the salient. At early dawn of the 13th May, the wearied Confederate troops are withdrawn from the angle. Lee's wings are bound together by this stronger second line. In spite of Confederate losses by capture on this fearful 12th May, Grant's casualties in making assaults have been so great that the lost on both sides stand in number about the same, — 7000.

From May 13 to 18 Grant "manœuvred and waited for reinforcements." Halleck sends him 24,500 and to Butler 3000. The Confederates rest and satisfy their hunger from the Federal haversacks left on the field. Real coffee and sugar boiled in new Federal tin cups bring additional cause of hilarity to the Confederate line of battle. The evening of the 12th brings news of sorrow to every Confederate soldier. The day before, May 11, Stuart has given up his life to

¹ All relieved except 37th Massachusetts.

defend Richmond against Sheridan's attack.¹ But May 17 brings unwelcome messages to Grant. Halleck telegraphs as follows: "Sigel is in full retreat on Strasburg. He will do nothing but run. Never did anything else." At New Market (on the 12th of May) Sigel has retired before Breckinridge and left six Federal guns and 900 prisoners of war. Likewise the information comes to Grant that May 16 has closed on Butler fast in the huge bottle formed by the James and Appomattox rivers. Beauregard holds the cork of the bottle, and Butler can neither advance nor retreat.

On the morning of the 18th of May, Grant masses the 2d and 6th corps and sends them to storm the salient. Lee's heavy guns are ready along the new base line. Spherical case and canister from twenty-nine guns break the Federal advance host of 12,000 and drive them back. At the same early hour Burnside falls back from his attack against Lee's right wing. The Army of the Potomac is drifting toward its own left flank; looks for weak points in Lee's line. But at every assault Lee bristles out in breastworks, and Grant draws back. May 19 Ewell is sent around the Federal right to discern Grant's position. He finds severe battle, and is repulsed with the loss of 900 men. But Grant has been held in check another day. The night of May 20 finds Hancock leading Grant's advance southeastward to the Fredericksburg Railroad. The chapter of Federal losses on the Spottsylvania field recounts the fall and capture of nearly 18,000 men. Over 37,000 in number is the total sum of disabled in the Army of the Potomac since the passage of the Rapidan. Probably less than half that number measures the reduction in Lee's effective strength.

At noonday, May 21, Ewell leads the advance to Hanover Junction beyond the North Anna River. Twenty-eight miles

¹ Lee's Order pays tribute to the gallant horseman, as a man, as a Christian, and as a soldier. — *Fitz-Lee's Life of Lee*, p. 338.

are covered in less than twenty-four hours, for the forenoon of the 22d brings Ewell's head of column across the river. Noonday of this same 22d marks the passage of Anderson's column across the Anna Bridge, while the morning of May 23d finds Hill's corps on the southern bank of the stream. Lee has not possessed the strength to strike Grant's flank in the latter's circuitous march. The Confederate commander has preferred to follow the shorter pathway and block Grant's journey southward. As Lee rides away from Spottsylvania, he remarks, "We wish no more salients." Pickett and Breckinridge, with 9000 muskets, await Lee's coming, and midday of the 23d finds the Army of Northern Virginia looking out northward from intrenchments to mark the approach of Grant's columns beyond the river.

In the centre commanding the telegraph road stands the 1st corps behind heavy guns. Lee's right is held by the 2d corps and his left by the 3d. Farther up the stream the corps of Warren finds passageway and threatens the Confederate left flank. Hill sends Wilcox at 6 P. M. to drive Warren back, but Warren shows much strength, and as darkness falls both sides begin to build fortifications.

Sunrise of the 24th brings Lee to his left wing to mark the advantage gained by Warren. His wrath is aroused. The crimson flush mounts high on neck and forehead. The eyes are as a flame of fire. The courtly manner is stiffened into reserve. His words of questioning fall like a scathing rebuke. "General Hill, why did you let those people cross the river? Why did you not drive them back as General Jackson would have done?"

Since Hill has already drawn back the left wing, Lee retires his right wing from the river, but allows his centre to rest on the North Anna at Ox Ford. The Confederate army is drawn up in form like a wedge, with the point thrust against the stream. Grant pushes his 5th and 6th corps overstream above to face southward, and Hancock's 2d corps crosses

below and faces northward. Burnside seeks passage at the Confederate centre, but suffers loss from Lee's guns on the river's brink. Grant's army is cut in twain on the point of the Confederate wedge. If either Federal wing shall bring assistance to the other, the Federal force must make a double passage of the Anna River.

At this juncture Lee is seized with sickness. During twenty days he has rested little. Not until ten or eleven at night has he sought slumber, and three o'clock each morning has found him at breakfast by candle-light, and then to the front to spend eighteen hours along the line of battle. His iron frame has yielded at last, but he remains in command.¹ As Lee lies in his tent, he cries out in impatience, "We must strike them!" "We must never let them pass us again!" "We must strike them!"

The morning of the 27th May dawns upon the vacant Federal encampment. Grant has sought the northern bank of the Anna, and is heading his columns southeastward. Grant has received complete checkmate and has failed to cut the Central Railroad. Lee is disappointed that greater results have not followed the separation of Grant's two wings. But the combative spirit never wavers, and at a swift pace the Confederate column starts out upon the home stretch in the Wilderness race. Directly southward between the Central and Fredericksburg railways, Lee moves the 2d corps, now under Early. The 1st corps swings around to Lee's right along the Fredericksburg Railroad to Ashland. A journey of twenty-four miles in thirty hours brings the Army of Northern Virginia, the afternoon of 28th May, into line of battle facing northeastward on the central ridge between the Pamunkey and the Chickahominy rivers, and more particularly between the Totopotomoy and Beaver Dam Creek.

¹ Hill's strength failed after the Wilderness, and Early commanded the 3d corps at Spottsylvania. Now Ewell retires permanently from the 2d corps, and Early assumes control.

Grant has kept close to the northern bank of the Pamunkey, and now seeks to cross that stream and seize Richmond. Fitz-Lee's cavalry division has retarded Grant's progress until Lee has brought his entire army athwart the pathway of the Army of the Potomac. Grant moves his army into the region between the two sluggish streams. Lee's front is formidable, and Grant halts to await reinforcements from Butler. May 30 W. F. Smith, 18th corps, reaches the White House on the lower Pamunkey, and marches to give strength to Grant's left wing.

Lee's sickness continues during these critical days. For the first time in the campaign he spends the night under the roof of a house near Atlee's Station. His determined will keeps him at the front each day.

From Beauregard's army south of Richmond Lee asks reinforcements. Since May 20 Beauregard has besieged the Richmond officials with proposals for a game in grand strategy. Grant and Butler occupy outside lines, while Beauregard and Lee hold the inner defensive lines. Let Lee fall back to the Chickahominy and draw Grant after him is Beauregard's suggestion. A portion of Lee's force may hold Grant at bay while the other portion brings aid to Beauregard, and Butler's army become prisoners of war. The second step in Beauregard's scheme is easy of comprehension. Beauregard moves northward and stands by the side of Lee to receive the capitulation of Grant in the swamps of the Chickahominy. Whatever the merits of the scheme, Lee has steadfastly maintained that continual battle must be offered to Grant. When at length he does reach the immediate vicinity of the capital city, he asks Beauregard to lend assistance. But Beauregard seems unwilling now to play at strategy. He telegraphs to Richmond: "War Department must determine when and what troops to order from here." Lee's reply to Beauregard is this: "If you cannot determine what troops you can spare, the department cannot. The result of your

delay will be disaster. Butler's troops will be with Grant to-morrow."

Grant withdraws from Lee's front, and once again moves by the left flank to Cold Harbor. May 31 Hoke's division from Beauregard confronts the Federal advance on the battleground of 1862. Lee extends his right to give support, and the afternoon of June 1 witnesses severe battle on the roadway between Old and New Cold Harbor. A Federal charge breaks through Lee's right wing and carries away 500 captives. But Grant pays tribute of 1200 men for this Confederate loss. The two lines of battle are formed at close range, and both are made strong with intrenchments.

During the hot, sultry night of June 1, Grant withdraws his own right wing and moves it by the left beyond the Cold Harbor Road. Lee meets this change of position by sending Hill and Breckinridge to defend his own right flank. In this race for position, the Confederates have the advantage. Breckinridge and Hill reach the Confederate right and make their positions strong on Turkey Hill just as Hancock reaches the position by moving on the arc of the circle. Lee's right wing now defends the passage of the Chickahominy at Grapevine Bridge. The heat of the second day of June brings weariness and thirst to the men of both armies. The dust from marching columns hovers over the field in dense clouds. The pangs of hunger oppress the Confederate regiments as they take their places behind the earthworks.¹

In Lee's centre at the Cold Harbor roadway stand Anderson and Hoke; Anderson touches the left side of the road and Hoke the right-hand side facing eastward. Beyond Hoke southward Breckinridge and Hill extend the Confederate line to the Chickahominy. Fitz-Lee patrols the region south of

¹ Since the departure from Hanover Junction the troops have received only two issues of rations. One issue contains three hard biscuits and a meagre slice of pork to each man. The second issue of one cracker to each man, two days after the issue first mentioned, is the only food that cheers the Confederates as they prepare for the struggle at Cold Harbor. — GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON.

that stream. Looking northward from Lee's centre along the Confederate works, we see the 2d corps under Early at Anderson's left hand, and Heth's division holds the extreme Confederate left. In the afternoon of June 2 Lee takes the offensive, orders Early to move against the right flank of the Federal army and drive down in front of the Confederate line. Early finds Grant's right too strong for his charge, but the Federal commander makes no serious counter-stroke, and both lines intrench where the darkness finds them.

At 4.30 on the morning of June 3 the assault of Grant is delivered all along the line, six miles in length. The Confederate works are full of salient angles, and Lee's batteries secure a cross-fire against nearly every Federal division that moves against their front. The Confederate rifle-pits are literally enwrapped in flame. Fierce hunger has maddened Lee's men, and they multiply their shots with fearful swiftness. Federal valor can only rush forward to die before the Confederate marksmen.

Against the Confederate right Hancock's corps moves gallantly onward in double line of attack with supports in rear. A forward salient in front of Hill and Breckinridge becomes the prey of Hancock's men; 300 Confederate prisoners are added to this initial success. But the counter-stroke from Breckinridge forces Hancock from the works; the Confederate heavy guns pour an enfilading fire along the line of the 2d corps, and Hancock leaves behind him on the field more than 2000 disabled men. Before the fire of Lee's centre a thousand men have fallen in Smith's 18th corps, and near Lee's left the Federal 6th corps has paid tribute of 800 men.

The order comes from headquarters to renew the Federal attack. Hancock uses his discretion as corps commander, and declines to move his line forward.

Smith says, "That order I refused to obey."

M. T. McMahon of the 6th corps makes this statement:

"The order was sent to the soldiers without comment by officers. The order was obeyed by simply renewing the fire from the men as they lay in position."

Grant now orders the Army of the Potomac to approach Lee's lines by constructing regular approaches, as in a siege. His professed object is now to hold Lee back from sending aid to Hunter in the Valley. In this Grant does not succeed.

Lee now takes the offensive on a wider field than the Wilderness. Two assaults are delivered by Early against Grant's right and rear on June 6 and 7, but fortifications hold him in check. June 10 finds Lee detaching Breckinridge toward the Valley to oppose the march of Hunter. June 12 Hampton crosses the path of Sheridan at Trevillian and restrains the Federal cavalry from the advance against Lynchburg and the junction with Hunter.

The evening of June 12 marks Lee's order to Early to lead the 2d corps against Hunter's column in the Valley. Thence down the Valley is Early directed to march across the Potomac to threaten Washington. Not long has Lee to wait to hear of Hunter's repulse and to learn that Early is in front of the Federal capital.

Under cover of the night of June 12, Grant starts two columns across the Chickahominy toward the James. Lee meets this movement by dispatching Hoke's division to Petersburg on the morning of June 13, because that place is "now threatened," says Lee. He moves the two corps of Anderson and Hill by the right flank, and covers the approaches toward Richmond by a line of battle drawn from White Oak Swamp to Malvern Hill.

Grant veils his passage of the James by a cloud of cavalry on his right flank and by thrusting the 5th corps along the northern bank of the James toward White Oak Swamp. Smith's corps is hurried forward to aid Butler in the capture of Petersburg. Hancock follows in the track of Smith.

Beauregard sends urgent messages to Lee calling for assistance to withstand the Federal assault against his lines.¹

Lee still holds his two corps on the northern bank of the James. On the night of June 15 he pitches his own tent on the southern bank of the river at Drury's Bluff. Morning of the 16th he moves divisions of Pickett and Field, and June 17 finds them in part of Beauregard's old line near Bermuda. At 3 P. M. June 16, Lee telegraphs that he has not heard of Grant's passage of James. At this same hour, Wilson's division and the 6th Federal corps are still on the northern bank of the James. It is still possible for Grant to assail Richmond from the direction of the Chickahominy. As soon as Lee makes himself certain that Grant will not assail Richmond, he throws his columns forward, and the evening of June 18 finds the Army of Northern Virginia ready to throw back the advance of the Army of the Potomac in its attempt to seize Petersburg. The Army of the Potomac has manifested a splendid valor. Between the 15th and 18th of June 10,000 names have disappeared from the Federal list of present for duty; 54,926 is the total number of casualties between the Rapidan and the James. These losses have been balanced by 55,000 men received as reinforcements.

Grant writes to Meade after the repulse of June 18 at Petersburg: "Now we will rest the men and use the spade for their protection until a new vein can be struck."

The Army of Northern Virginia yet retains its elasticity and vigor. Marchings, perils in battle, hunger and sleepless

¹ Lee pays little heed to Beauregard, because, —

(1) Lee has divided his own army. Has two corps, less than 30,000. Has returned Hoke to Beauregard, who has nearly one half as many troops as Lee.

(2) He is standing on the defensive before Richmond. Makes little effort except with cavalry to discover Grant's plans.

(3) Beauregard's previous calls for reinforcements against Butler perhaps have made Lee suppose that Beauregard exaggerates the danger to Petersburg.

Although there is the possibility of disaster to Petersburg, yet it falls not. Lee shows the same confidence in his men which they manifest toward him.

nights have reduced its numbers, but have not broken its spirit. The old yell has gathered additional fierceness, the men go into battle with the same light-hearted buoyancy. Perhaps not one among the soldiers holds a doubt as to the ultimate success of the Army of Northern Virginia. Each man possesses a pardonable pride in the deeds of May-June, 1864. But each Confederate soldier has profound respect for his opponents, and is ready to admit that in this Wilderness wrestle Lee's army has found in the Army of the Potomac a foeman worthy of its steel.

III

USELESSNESS OF THE MAPS FURNISHED TO STAFF OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC PREVIOUS TO THE CAMPAIGN OF MAY 1864

BY

COLONEL THEODORE LYMAN

A. D. C. TO MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE MEADE, U. S. A.

Read before the Society May 12, 1879

USELESSNESS OF THE MAPS FURNISHED TO STAFF OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC PREVIOUS TO THE CAMPAIGN OF MAY 1864

EARLY in the spring of 1864 there were furnished to the general and staff officers a series of topographical maps of the country south of the Rapidan. Coarsely executed, and printed in true congressional style on wretched spongy paper, which wore out after being carried a few days in the pocket, these maps embraced, nevertheless, all the information the Engineer Department had been able to compile from state, county, and town surveys, reports of spies and of negroes, and the reconnoissances of cavalry. As the army advanced during the campaign, the topographical engineers, with untiring labor and often at great risk of their lives, surveyed the country, running lines rapidly by the Schmalkalden compass, and estimating distances by paces, by the gait of their horses, or by angles. Each day's work was collated at headquarters, drawn in black lines on a white ground, photographed in white lines on a brown ground, and immediately issued to the commanders. The photographic map here treated is on the same scale as the lithographed engineer maps referred to (one inch to the mile), and embraces the country from the Orange Plank Road on the north to Spottsylvania Court House on the south; and from Corbin's Bridge on the west to the "Gate," so called, on the east. It was issued about the middle of May, 1864. This field survey, on being compared with the three-inch engineer map of 1867, is found to be practically correct in the distances and directions of the chief points, although the courses of the streams and details of the roads are naturally only approximate. In the compound map herewith presented, this field survey (drawn in *black*) is superposed on the litho-

graphic engineer map (drawn in *red*), in order to show the gross inaccuracies of the latter. Chancellorsville being made to coincide in the two, we immediately note the following mistakes in the lithographic map: The junction of the Plank and Brock roads is one and one quarter miles too far to the northwest; Todd's Tavern, one mile to the north; Corbin's Bridge, one mile to the northwest; South Bend of the Po River, two and three quarters miles to the west; Spottsylvania Court House, two and one half miles to the west; and the house of S. Alsop, one and one quarter miles too far to the north. These discrepancies are in a territory only eight miles by nine. Todd's Tavern, in reference to Spottsylvania Court House, is about thirty degrees out of position, and Piney Branch Church at least forty-five degrees. The Orange Plank, from Chancellorsville to Tabernacle Church, is nearly correct, and so is the Brock Road, from the Plank to Todd's Tavern, and the Catharpin as far as Corbin's Bridge; but most of the other roads are quite wild. The effect of such a map was, of course, utterly to bewilder and discourage the officers who used it, and who spent precious time in trying to understand the incomprehensible. To march a column from the Orange Plank Road to Spottsylvania Court House by such a map would be comparable to marching from Boston with intent to go to Quincy, but coming out, in fact, at Milton Lower Mills.

IV

NOTES AND RECOLLECTIONS OF OPENING
OF THE CAMPAIGN OF 1864

BY

FIRST LIEUTENANT McHENRY HOWARD,
LATE A. D. C. AND ACTING ASSISTANT INSPECTOR-GENERAL, C. S. A.

Read before the Society April 16, 1883

NOTES AND RECOLLECTIONS OF OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN OF 1864

I. IN WINTER QUARTERS

AFTER Meade's demonstration at Mine Run and withdrawal to the north side of the Rapidan, in the last days of November, 1863, it seemed unlikely that there would be any more active operations that year; and the Army of Northern Virginia (Confederate) settled down in winter quarters. Stuart's brigade, of Johnson's division, Ewell's corps, which had been for three or four weeks in camp on Blackwalnut Run,¹ was moved back some miles to a position near Pisgah Church, on or a short distance from the Orange and Fredericksburg Stone Road, about six or seven miles east of Orange Court House; and General Stuart immediately went to work with his usual energy to clean up the ground, make the men as comfortable as possible, except by idleness, and to improve the efficiency of his command in every way. Our summer camp on Poplar Run, near Montpelier, ten or twelve miles higher up the Rapidan, when resting from the Gettysburg campaign, had been pronounced to be a model one in the army; and he was determined that this should be its equal in every respect, while the assurance of some months' inactivity would enable him to carry out many practical measures which could not be undertaken in the uncertainty of ever continuing long in one stay in the campaigning season.

Rising ground was selected for the regimental camps, and they were thoroughly "policed" and swept, with brooms made of twigs bundled together, until several inches, perhaps, of the loose surface soil were removed and a hard dirt floor

¹ A tributary of Mine and Mountain Run.

was gained. The men's quarters were kept clean and well ventilated, and they were exhorted to have their bunks raised above the ground. The morning sick reports had been carefully studied in our summer camp, and had been found to vary according to the degree of attention which was given to these details in the different regiments; and the 10th Virginia, which had all its bunks so raised and well swept underneath, had then reduced its sick list to a lower rate than we had ever known. Now, however, to keep warm was the overruling necessity, and this regulation could not be enforced, as undoubtedly next to the ground is the warmest way a soldier with a scanty supply of covering can sleep. Wattled cedar or pine fences inclosed a space around the brigade guard-house, and the prisoners were kept employed corduroying wet places and with other work of the sort about the camp-grounds. The orders against burning or displacing rails were strictly enforced, and at the end of winter all fencing was in as good, if not in precisely the same, condition as we had found it, some new rails having been required to be mauled, I think. Even timber used for fuel was estimated by a board of officers and certificates given, although I cannot venture to affirm that owners were ever paid for it. The men were moderately drilled, and schools of instruction were ordered for the officers. The 10th Virginia was the only regiment which had a band (I think we were trying to organize one in the 1st North Carolina with some instruments captured at Gettysburg), and we utilized it to the best general advantage by having daily brigade guard-mounting, with as much military pomp and circumstance as we could get up. A drum beat the hours at brigade guard-house to regulate the time of all the camp.

A number of shoemakers in the different regiments — seventeen, I think — were encouraged to send home — and in some instances were given leave to go — for their tools, and were put to work repairing shoes, being exempted from guard and other routine camp duty, but ready to fall in with their

muskets on any call to arms. The shoe-shops were a separate camp, near brigade headquarters, and under our immediate supervision, guarded by sentinels, and no person was allowed to visit them or carry his shoes to be mended without a pass and order from his company and regimental commanders, approved by the adjutant or inspector general. A careful estimate and report of the saving in the issue of shoes to our brigade during the winter was made to the higher authorities at one time, but I am afraid to say from memory what the saving was confidently stated to have been, certainly several hundred pairs; besides, the men's feet were kept in better condition.¹

Having taken a sort of census of the entire command, we knew exactly where to look at any time for skilled workmen in different trades. The 37th Virginia, from the mountains of the southwestern part of the state, we found to furnish a greater proportion of mechanics, the other regiments being more largely composed of men from the farming class. Wheelwrights were detailed to put the ambulances (this under the zealous charge of Surgeon Henkel, of the 37th Virginia, senior surgeon) and transportation generally in perfect order. I think log shelters were made for the horses, and they were carefully looked after. General Steuart had also detailed, or meditated detailing tinnerns to mend canteens, cups, and other tinwork. Drummers or tanners were given a few days' leave to go to their homes or places not far distant, on condition of bringing back dog-skins for drumheads; and although the animal's integument was tanned in a marvelously short time, it was found to answer very well.

The general was especially desirous of establishing tailor

¹ On the march back from Gettysburg in the summer before, the barefooted men of the division, that is to say, those whose shoes were worn out or whose feet were sore from wearing bad shoes or other causes, were organized into a separate command, under officers, to pick their way on the grassy roadside, and by easy stages on each day's march. My recollection is that this barefooted and sorefooted command sometimes numbered a fourth of the division.

“shops” to patch and mend clothing, on a like scale with the shoe-shops, or greater, and sent up urgent applications for waste odds and ends of cloth and thread at the government factories, but had received no answer when the opening of the spring campaign put a check to these and many other schemes. In short, recognizing the straits that the Confederacy was now put to in the furnishing of supplies, we aimed to save and eke out issues in every possible way.

The general also designed cloth badges (metal was not to be had) to distinguish the men of different regiments, — a red cross on ground of different colors, or something that way.

The physical condition of the men I do not, and did not then, consider good. Their rations had been systematically reduced to the smallest possible quantity and there was almost no variety. After an official inspection of the whole command in March or April (I was acting inspector-general and made stated inspections, reports of which went up through inspectors), I had deemed it a serious duty to make it a part of my report that the sallow complexions and general appearance of the men indicated that they were insufficiently fed, and to urge that the rations should be increased. A soldier fighting for the best of causes should have enough to eat as long as food will hold out issued in that way; he may put up with frequent irregularities, but if his ration be systematically insufficient for his appetite, his spirits and endurance must surely fail or be greatly impaired. It is to be wished that we had statements of the rations actually issued to the men, particularly during the last two years of the war. For illustration, our meals at brigade headquarters during this winter were usually as follows: Breakfast consisted of a plate of “corn-dodgers” (corn-meal and water) and mashed potatoes, the latter not issued, I believe, but bought at a distance. I suppose we also had coffee, that is to say, some substitute for it, but I do not think there was often sugar. For dinner, towards sunset, we had corn-bread again, and soup

made of water thickened with corn-meal and mashed potatoes, and cooked with a small piece of meat, which last, if salt, was taken out when the soup was done and kept to be cooked over again in the mashed potatoes for next morning's breakfast. A dog could not have lived on what was left; there was, in fact, nothing left. Officers drew one ration each, like the men, were prohibited from purchasing from the commissaries; and as nothing could be had in the neighborhood for love or money, we could only occasionally buy a few articles, such as apple-butter or sorghum molasses, when our wagons went over to the Valley or other remote regions for forage or supplies. The men were *not*, therefore, to my observation, in good physical condition.¹ Vaccination was often followed by serious consequences, and this came, I think, from a low condition of the system more than from the use of impure matter. By the way, it was curious how commonly men returning from furlough reported that they spent the first part of their leave sick at home; they were never taken sick on coming back from home to open-air life in the field.

They were often sorely tried, too, by receiving letters or messages telling of dire distresses, and apprehensions of worse, in their families at home. These letters were constantly coming up to brigade headquarters, appended to urgent applications for furloughs. They were, after proper investigation, usually forwarded, approved by General Steuart, who thought that they should be liberally given in such cases, both from

¹ In the spring of 1863 Major-General Trimble, then commanding this division, published an order enumerating the edible wild vegetables and plants, such as dandelion, poke-sprouts, curly leaf dock, lamb's-quarter, sheep-sorrel, watercresses, etc., and requiring regimental commanders to make daily details to gather them. It was said that bags of plantain were sometimes brought in by mistake, with disagreeable results when eaten. All Confederate soldiers had long since learned the comparative merits of rye, wheat, acorns, chestnuts, sweet potato, dandelion, browned meal or flour, as substitutes for coffee; also sassafras, etc., for tea. I remember an alarming rumor that once spread through the army and country of certain results of the use of rye coffee, bearing on the future increase of population of the Confederacy.

humanity and policy. But the Confederate ranks were thin, and the heavy masses of the enemy always threatening in our front, and only in extreme instances could any applications be granted.¹ Under these and many other trials and daily hardships the men bore up with a constancy that was wonderful and which can hardly be understood by the outside world.

The Rapidan, the dividing line of the two armies, was picketed by a brigade for a week at a time from each division, and there being four brigades in General Edward Johnson's division, the turn came to us once in every four weeks. The picket line assigned to this division was the right of the infantry line, and extended from the mouth of Mountain Run (which unites with Mine Run in emptying into the Rapidan) on the east to or near Mitchell's Ford on the west. I think it was only towards spring that our line stretched as far as Mitchell's Ford. Except at one point, the river-bank was high on our side, in places very lofty, precipitous, and rough, and level on the other side, so that we were able to post our chain of sentinels immediately along the river, while those of the enemy were thrown back a couple of hundred yards or so. The exception was on our extreme right, where the mouth of the Mountain-Mine Run valley made the ground low on our side, while a cliff rose from the water's edge on the further side, and the vedette there posted sometimes gave us a good deal of annoyance. Our own sentinel, being almost underneath, had to fortify his position with fence-rails, and it several times happened that his *vis-à-vis*, in a bad humor perhaps from the state of the weather, or from being kept on duty over his time by a negligent corporal, crept down to the edge of the cliff before dawn, and as soon as it was light

¹ General D. H. Hill's ideas were more philosophic and far-seeing. He once indorsed an application for furlough substantially in this way: 'Respectfully forwarded approved, for the reason that, if our brave soldiers are not occasionally permitted to visit their homes, the next generation in the South will be composed of the descendants of skulkers and cowards.'

enough to see, fired upon him, or on the officer of the day making his rounds. There were, I believe, one or two men wounded in this way during the winter. It was reported, too, that a colored soldier was often posted at this point, and the rumor, although unfounded, produced additional irritation among our men, particularly as the usual truce between pickets was pretty well observed along the rest of the line.

But if at a disadvantage here, we had the upper hand everywhere else. Once some North Carolinians of our neighboring brigade, usually a staid set of men, undertook to vary the monotony of picket life by a practical joke, which might have had serious consequences, at Mitchell's Ford. At this point a strong reserve was maintained which occupied a house or yard about six hundred feet back from the crossing, while at the same distance from the north bank the enemy had a like force at a house which seemed also to be the headquarters of some officer of rank. The North Carolinians had found a pair of immense wheels with a tongue attached, probably used for hauling timber, which at a distance looked not unlike a gun-carriage, although it would have carried a piece of great calibre. Upon this they mounted a huge hollow log, and providing themselves with a rammer and some large round stones, they suddenly dashed out with it from behind the house halfway to the river, wheeled into position, and pointed it at the opposite house, rammed with loud words of command a stone into the log, and seemed about to knock the enemy's headquarters about their ears. For a time there was considerable commotion on the other side. The picket line hurriedly prepared for action, and the house was speedily emptied, the inmates not standing on any order in going, but making for the woods at once. The joke was presently appreciated, and with much laughter the lines resumed their status. Such was the account at least, perhaps a little colored, which I received on riding up to Mitchell's Ford one day and noticing the "quaker" piece with its rammer and pile of

stones, and the picket line apparently quieting down from some excitement.

On another occasion we had a little alarm on our side. Early one morning a messenger came in haste to our headquarters at Gibson's house to report that an enterprising fellow had stolen forward during the night and intrenched himself behind a heavy gate-post in such a position as to have a part of our line completely at his mercy. The signal corps men stationed with us looked through their glasses and declared they could see his shadow moving about, and on going to the river-bank we certainly saw the shadow plainly enough with the naked eye, and had no doubt it was that of the man digging to make his position behind the gate-post more secure. Expecting every moment the fellow, having established himself to his satisfaction, would pick off one of us, we were devising schemes for enfilading and dislodging him from his stronghold, perhaps by crossing the river, when some one suddenly made the discovery that the shadow was simply that of the gate-post itself running up and down the bars of the gate which, apparently closed, was imperceptibly swinging a few inches to and fro in the wind.

Another time an officer on horseback, accompanied by two Culpeper damsels, rode down to the river near Tobacco Stick Ford, midway or on the left of our line, to propose an exchange of newspapers, as had been practiced in the time of the brigade before us. We, however, were more strict in obeying orders about holding communication with the enemy, and the officer was immediately covered by a gun, and directed to come across. Naturally indignant and alarmed, he attempted to explain and wished to withdraw, but our men would by no means consent, although his companions added their entreaties, almost in tears. They were held as prisoners, with the river between, while a dispatch was sent to our headquarters for instructions, when they were allowed to retire with an admonition to keep their distance thereafter.

While picketing here in the fall, a party of twenty or thirty of us, Major Kyle, Captain Williamson, Dr. Johnson, and myself of the general's staff, with some men of the 23d Virginia and 2d Maryland (then attached to the brigade), tempted by the sight of some sheep and cattle daily grazing on the low grounds opposite, a share of which the owner said we might have for salvage, crossed the river at Tobacco Stick Ford one night and succeeded in bringing back about twoscore. Emboldened by success we went over again, determined to attempt the capture of a picket post. Guided by a citizen of the locality, whose long gray hair hung down his shoulders, we got safely behind the picket line and were approaching a house in Indian file, when a sentinel descried us in the bright moonlight and fired on us at short range. Our citizen, who was armed with an old-fashioned bell-mouthed fowling-piece, loaded with a handful of powder and buckshot, promptly replied with a bright glare and thunderous report, whereupon the sentinel cried "Murder!" and ran for the house, we in pursuit. But the reserve there stationed was aroused, and the whole picket line alarmed, so after exchanging a brisk fire for a while, we were fortunate to get back without loss from such a hare-brained and useless enterprise. Next morning a body of cavalry was parading in our front, no doubt wondering what all the commotion had been caused for. We had full rations of beef and mutton served out to the command.

Such were some of the little excitements which varied the dullness of picket life.

Having the extreme right of the infantry picket line of the army, and with the infantry's distrust of cavalry protection, we watched our flank also in a measure, especially towards the opening of spring. During the winter General Steuart, always active about something or many things, had with the assistance of Captain George Williamson, assistant adjutant-general, as indefatigable as himself, perfected a plan, accord-

ing to which on a moment's notice the picket posts would deploy so as to form a connected skirmish line a mile long with reserves at the more important points; and as the ground was extremely rough in places, especially on the right, and communication slow and difficult, this well-preconcerted arrangement would have been found of the greatest service had any attempt been made on our front. General Steuart and Captain Williamson also examined the whole river front picketed by Ewell's corps, from Mountain Run to Somerville Ford on the west, and drew up an elaborate plan for guarding it, with a complete system of rules for the government of the pickets, which was adopted by General Ewell and adhered to for the rest of the winter. It was my duty, or practice, to ride around nightly, but at uncertain hours, to inspect our line, which was a work of a couple of hours or so. Indeed one or two posts could not be visited after dark without dismounting some distance back from the river. There was also a field officer of the day, and General Steuart and Captain Williamson were constantly riding about, so that our pickets were certainly kept on the alert. The picket line was made up of details, the main part of the brigade being in bivouac a short distance in rear behind a fringe of wood.

General George H. Steuart's (sometimes called the 3d) brigade was composed of five regiments: 10th Virginia, Colonel E. T. H. Warren, numbering about 250 present for duty; 23d Virginia, Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzgerald, about 250; 37th Virginia, Colonel Titus V. Williams, about 300; 1st North Carolina State Troops, Colonel Hamilton A. Brown, about 350; and 3d North Carolina State Troops, Lieutenant-Colonel O. M. Parsley, about 275.

The North Carolina regiments were so designated because they were two of a series of ten regiments which had been at the beginning mustered into service for the war instead of the then usual term of twelve months, and officers had been originally appointed by the governor, and not elected, and

continued to be nominated by him to the War Office at Richmond. All of the ten that I saw during the war were the better for these distinctions, and claimed something of the esprit, by some called "upkishness," of regulars. The 1st was from the central and western part of the state; the 3d was from the parts around Wilmington. The latter was certainly one of the best officered regiments I ever saw, and maintained a very high state of discipline. The 10th Virginia was from the Valley, one company, however, being from Madison County; the 37th was from the mountains of the southwest; the 23d (which had recently lost its former efficient commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Walton, in a very sharp engagement of Johnson's division at "Payne's Farm" on the 27th November, the day Meade crossed for the Mine Run demonstration) was from Louisa, Halifax, Charlotte, Prince Edward, and other counties, and Richmond City.

General Steuart's staff was composed of Captain George Williamson, of Maryland, assistant adjutant-general; Major Tanner, quartermaster; I had been volunteering since Gettysburg as assistant inspector-general, and sometimes as adjutant-general, General Trimble, upon whose staff I was, being a prisoner.

It would be, I am satisfied, a fair estimate to say that in the spring the effective strength of the brigade in line of battle was 1400 officers and men. Major-General Edward Johnson's division contained three other brigades, viz.: Brigadier-General James A. Walker's (the old "Stonewall," and sometimes called the 1st brigade), 2d, 4th, 5th, 27th (a battalion), and 33d Virginia regiments; Brigadier-General John M. Jones's (2d brigade), 21st, 25th, 42d, 44th, and 50th Virginia regiments (48th?); and Brigadier-General L. A. Stafford's brigade of five Louisiana regiments. I have no doubt the division numbered closely in the neighborhood of 5200 in line of battle, Stafford's and, I think, Jones's being smaller than Steuart's and the Stonewall.

Ewell's corps was composed of the three divisions of Johnson, Early, and Rodes, numbering in all about 16,000 in battle. Then there were A. P. Hill's corps of three divisions, and two of the three divisions of Longstreet's corps lately returned from hard service in the West, and the artillery and cavalry.

Colonel Walter H. Taylor, adjutant-general of the army, in his "Four Years with General Lee," quoting from the official returns, except as to Longstreet's two divisions, makes the aggregate strength of the army on April 20, 1864, 63,984 of all arms present for duty.¹

The men were fairly equipped as to arms and were in light marching order, having certainly no superabundant weight of clothing and few utensils of any kind.

II. IN THE WILDERNESS

On or about the 29th of April, 1864, Brigadier-General George H. Steuart's brigade, of Johnson's division, Ewell's corps, Army of Northern Virginia, left its winter quarters near Pisgah Church, six or seven miles east of Orange Court House, to perform a tour of picket duty on the Rapidan, about six miles distant.

The face of the country had been greatly changed by the prolonged occupation of the army, fencing being gone and fields thrown open, and extensive forests cut down, so that we were able to pursue almost a straight course, regardless of roads, to our destination. The road, or route, led sometimes over cultivated or abandoned fields, across marshy places bridged with "corduroy," and often for a long stretch through a desolate region of stumps where the summer before had been a thick growth of oak or pine timber with luxuriant foliage. The country, thinly settled before, was now almost uninhabited, and not even the bark of a dog or song of a bird

¹ Compare footnote, page 120. — EDITOR.

broke the dreary silence. After a leisurely march of two or three hours, we halted in a piece of woods a short distance back from the river, near the mouth of Mountain Run and Gibson's house, and in another hour or so the tedious operation of relieving pickets was completed and we were left in occupation.

As we were almost daily expecting the spring campaign to open, we redoubled our vigilance on this tour and looked well to our flank, being the extreme right of the infantry picket line. On the Culpeper (enemy's) side the woods had been so thinned out in the course of the winter that several camps of the enemy had come into plain view, and we kept a close watch on them for any signs like breaking up. For two or three days nothing out of the way was observed, but at last, about the 2d of May, an unusual quantity of smoke in the daytime, and moving of lights by night, gave sufficient token that the expected movement was about to be made. The last thing a soldier does, on breaking up camp, is to make a bon-fire of his surplus wood and winter "fixings."

On the morning of May 3 a cloud of dust was seen floating over the woods in front and stretching in a long line parallel with and down the river, and at one exposed point the white covers of wagons and glistening bayonets, or pieces, were visible, passing in endless succession, and there was no doubt the Union army was moving to cross one of the fords below, Germanna we rightly supposed. We signaled back to our principal observatory on Clark's Mountain, but were answered that they had a full view of the movement from that elevated point.

Clark's Mountain, in which the southwest range terminates in this direction, is a short distance in rear of the Rapidan, and commands a wide view of all the country in front. All day long we watched the ominous cloud of dust hanging in the air and the stream of wagons and glittering metal, and knew that a few hours would find the two armies contending

once more on a Wilderness battle-ground. That night one or two deserters came over and gave confirmation, if any were needed, that Grant had put his whole army in motion.¹ The next morning showed the same line of march and canopy of dust marking its course down the river. Two more deserters, one a Belgian speaking French only, came across at Mitchell's Ford, closely pursued and fired on to the edge of the water. In the afternoon we received orders to march, the quartermasters and men in camp being directed to pack up at winter quarters and move down the Orange and Fredericksburg Plank Road to join us. About 3 P. M., May 4, we moved out under cover of the woods, and took a cross-road in a southerly direction towards the Wilderness, the 37th Virginia being left on the picket line, with instructions to withdraw after night and overtake us. At dark we struck the Orange and Fredericksburg Stone Road, which runs parallel with and a mile or two from the Plank Road, and went into bivouac.

Early in the morning, May 5, Johnson's division being now united, — our 37th Virginia not being up, however, — we started down the Stone Road towards Fredericksburg, but on reaching a point nearly abreast of Germanna Ford and within two miles of Wilderness Run and Tavern, were brought to a halt by the information that the enemy, having crossed there, were moving out into the country along our front. A brisk skirmish fire soon began, probably with J. M. Jones's brigade, which had the advance; and turning down an old wood road which went off from the Stone Road to the left oblique, we presently halted again and formed in line of battle.

We were now in the heart of the "Wilderness" country, a well-named tract extending from the Rapidan on the north across the Stone and Plank roads to the south and to near

¹ The Union official reports represent the movement to have commenced on the morning of the 4th, and I may have made an error of a day as to our observations. But my recollection, reduced to writing in 1865, was that troops and wagon-trains were visible moving down the river on the 3d.

Fredericksburg on the east. It is in places level and marshy, or with numerous wet spring-heads, but for the most part rugged or rolling, with very few fields of thin soil, easily washing into gullies, and still fewer houses scattered here and there. The woods, which seem to stretch out interminably, are in some places of pine with low spreading branches, through which a horseman cannot force his way without much turning and twisting, but generally the oak predominates. In many places the large trees had been cut down in years past, — whether for the construction of plank roads or for furnaces I do not know, — and a jungle of switch had sprung up ten or twenty feet high, more impenetrable, if possible, than the pine. A more difficult or disagreeable field of battle could not well be imagined. There is no range for artillery. It is an affair of musketry at close quarters, from which one combatant or the other must soon recoil, if both do not construct breastworks, as they learned to do with wonderful rapidity.

Some little delay occurred in making a connected line, but by midday the men were lying down in position, our brigade being nearly at right angles with the Stone Road, which was one or two hundred yards from our right. The skirmish firing indicated that the enemy were moving diagonally across and towards our front, and it drew closer and closer until stray bullets were cutting through the branches overhead. General Johnson now rode by and stated that it was not intended to bring on a general engagement that day.¹ The men were getting a little restless, however, with suspense at having the enemy so close and yet unseen; and when General Johnson presently rode up a second time and called out, "Remember, it is not meant to have a general engagement," it was represented to him that the two lines must be face to face in a few moments; and whether a general engagement was intended or not, would it not be better to let the men

¹ No doubt General Lee desired to have Longstreet up and the army well concentrated.

have the impetus of a forward movement in the collision? "Very well," said he, "let them go ahead a little." The order was immediately given "Forward," which was responded to with alacrity, and almost in a moment a tremendous fire rolled along the line. Battle's brigade of Rodes's division had just been placed behind our right, and, catching the enthusiasm, rushed forward also. We pressed right on, firing heavily and driving the enemy through the dense thicket. Large bodies were taken prisoners, one regiment, the 116th New York, I think, in new uniforms, with heavy yellow embroidery, being captured almost as an organization; many of them, however, lay dead or wounded on the ground. For some time the wood road (I mean simply an old road through the woods, little used) by which we had advanced was blocked up by a mass of several hundred prisoners. None but the slightly wounded were allowed to guard them to the rear, and in most instances they were simply directed to keep that road back until they would meet troops having more leisure to take charge of them. Probably many escaped.

Meanwhile we had driven the enemy through the jungle to an open field extending on both sides of the Stone Road, and as they were pressed over it, a destructive fire was poured into them, so that it seemed to me the ground was more thickly covered with their dead and wounded than I had ever seen. A battery had been in the act of crossing this field, all but two pieces of which had wheeled about and gotten off, but all the horses and many of the drivers of these two had been shot down, and they remained standing in the midst of the dead and wounded for the next two days. The officer commanding the artillery, mounted on a fine Morgan horse, refused for a time to yield himself, and was only saved from death by the intervention of Colonel Brown of the 1st North Carolina, who, struck with his gallantry, called out, as an inducement to surrender, that he would give him the special honor of a commissioned officer to escort him to the

rear. The colonel mounted his horse, however, and rode him during the rest of the fight.

At this time General Johnson again passed by; and it being suggested to him that if it was not desired to have a general battle, the edge of the wood with the open space in front would be an excellent place to halt and re-form our line, he directed this to be done. About half our men had eagerly pushed on halfway across the field, and when recalled, some fifteen or twenty remained, taking refuge in a gully to avoid the stream of bullets which passed over their heads from friend and foe, until able to come in under cover of night.

I had observed some confusion on our right, where J. M. Jones's brigade adjoined us, supported by part of Battles's. One of Jones's best regiments, the 25th (?) Virginia, being unfortunately captured almost entire on the skirmish line, and a strong attack being made on him, — which we by our forward movement had anticipated with such good results, — his men gave back, and Jones himself, apparently disdaining to fly, was killed while sitting calmly on his horse, gazing at the approaching enemy. A very gallant and accomplished officer of the old regular army, his loss was severely felt in the next few days, particularly at the critical moment of the assault at Spottsylvania. Other troops assisted to repair this temporary reverse, and this part of the line was established and advanced with ours, or nearly.

On our left the Stonewall and Stafford's brigades had been and continued to be hotly engaged, and, being partly enveloped on the flank, lost heavily; General Stafford was killed some time during the afternoon, and most of his staff were killed or captured. The whole division finally occupied a line extending ours, and firing having ceased except in a desultory way, we began to construct such rude breastworks as we could without implements, and the enemy on his side busied himself in the same manner. Opposite the right of Johnson's

division, which rested near the Stone Road, the open field separated the hostile lines by a considerable interval, compared at least with the distance between them on our centre and left, where the breastworks were not more than pistol-shot apart, but with a thick jungle between. I think Steuart's brigade now was on the right, Jones's having been much shattered. I do not remember that a single piece of artillery had been so far used by either side. The fighting had been close and the loss in our division heavy, including Generals Jones and Stafford and many other officers of rank. In Steuart's brigade the 10th Virginia had lost two of its field officers killed, Colonel E. T. H. Warren and Major Coffman, both officers of unusual merit. Colonel Warren was one of the most efficient regimental commanders in the service and a gentleman of most amiable character. The other regiments also suffered severely in officers and men. It is usual to speculate on a far greater loss on the enemy's side, but as our brigade at least drove them across open ground, it is reasonable to suppose, and appearances indicated, that, except possibly in officers, they had lost more heavily. Certainly, the field in our front was strewn very thickly with their fallen, mingled with whom were some of our own. This being now the territory of neither party, the wounded of neither could be removed or receive any attention. Several efforts were made to relieve them, but the enemy opened fire whenever we exposed ourselves at the edge of the thicket, and the attempts had to be abandoned.

Our picket or skirmish line had been established a few paces in advance of the breastworks, if such they could then be called, and endless alarms and exchanges of shots kept us on the alert. It was half a dozen times reported that the enemy were advancing, that the voices of their officers could be plainly heard inciting the men, but no serious attack was made for some time; and after rushing to arms more than once under the impression that a charge was imminent,

we presently grew accustomed to the situation and received such alarms more stolidly.

Our 37th Virginia, which had been left on picket on the Rapidan, now came up, too late to participate in action with us; but being sent to the left to support Pegram's brigade of Early's division, where there was still desultory fighting, it soon found itself under fire, and Colonel Williams was slightly wounded in the foot. Just about dusk the enemy in our front made a rash charge across the corner of the open ground, apparently with the intention of recovering their abandoned artillery; but a couple of our pieces, which had now been placed on rising ground at the mouth of the Stone Road on our right, opened with grape and drove them back with loss. This closed the operations of the day.

Shortly afterwards a number of our men came in under cover of the darkness from the front, having lain in a gully for many hours, from the time when we had recalled and re-formed our line. When the enemy made their last charge at nightfall, they had passed directly over the gully, and in returning several stopped in it for shelter from the fire of grape. These our fellows had immediately captured, finding on them some canteens of whiskey, a very scarce article with us, and both parties made themselves as sociable and comfortable as their situation would permit. The senior officer of the squad, Captain de Priest of the 23d Virginia, now brought in his men and prisoners, and came to make a voluble and unsteady report of what he was pleased to call his separate operations during the day.

Usually there is not much groaning or outcry from wounded men on a battle-field; they do not feel acute pain or else bear their sufferings in silence. But on this occasion circumstances seemed to make their situation peculiarly distressing, and their moans and cries were painful to listen to. In the stillness of the night air every groan could be heard, and the calls for water and entreaties to brothers or comrades by

name to come and help them. Many, including some of our side, lay within a dozen paces of our skirmish line, whom we found it impossible to succor, although we tried. I was myself fired on while making two separate efforts to get some in. I well remember that at midnight, when I lay down to rest, and on waking during the night, their cries were ringing in my ears.

The next day, May 6, was spent in strengthening our slight works. There was no renewal of the attack in our quarter, although the pickets fired at short range on every one who exposed himself, by which we lost two good officers, one, I think, Lieutenant Cicero Craig of the 3d North Carolina. Our men were instructed to keep a jealous watch on the two pieces of artillery which still stood outside the line, to be the fruits of that side which should in the end remain masters of the field. We understood that Hill's corps was having an engagement over to the right, but knew no particulars. The sound of the heaviest firing may be inaudible at a short distance, comparatively speaking, in this gloomy and tangled wilderness, although distinctly heard perhaps dozens of miles away. I have known well-authenticated instances of the sound of battle being carried to the mountains of Virginia a hundred miles or more distant, without being heard in a great part at least of the intervening country.

A little before sunset Brigadier-General Gordon (of Early's division), who we heard had been asking permission all day to turn the enemy's right flank, being at last accorded it, made an attack with signal success, capturing Generals Seymour and Shaler with many men, and sweeping down the line for a considerable distance. We meanwhile stood under arms expecting orders to carry on the movement, but it was deemed too hazardous. It seems now that it might have been followed up with the promise of important results.¹

¹ General Edward Johnson told me a few days afterwards, when we were prisoners together, that the adjutant-general of the Union army stated to him

At any rate we found no enemy in our front the next morning, May 7, and sallied out to examine the ground, pushing our skirmishers forward, who finally came upon the enemy in position a long way further back — I think a mile. We now hauled in our two captured pieces, removed the wounded, who had been lying unsuccored for two days, and buried as many of the dead as we could. The brush had caught fire, and the creeping flames were burning up many of the latter and no doubt some of the wounded. The pioneer corps of our division reported having buried 582 of the enemy in front of our (Ewell's) corps, and many were left uninterred for want of time. The enemy's line gave evidence of having been abandoned in much haste, knapsacks, haversacks, rations, etc., lying strewn around, which were eagerly gathered by our men. About midday the enemy advanced in our front, and our pickets gradually fell back, but not to their original line on the left. For the rest of the day there was incessant firing between the skirmishers or pickets,¹ but without much damage done. At our right, near the Stone Road, there was a loss sustained, however, in the death of Colonel J. Thompson Brown, commanding the reserve artillery of Ewell's corps, who was shot through the head by a stray bullet as he rode behind the breastwork. One of the enemy, having climbed a tree, annoyed us by attempting to pick off our men across the open, but he was either shot down or made too uncomfortable on his perch.

Towards dark we were notified that there would be a move-

that on this occasion the army had been doubled on the centre and its safety seemed to be endangered. In conversation with General Collis since the war, he informed me he was with General Grant at the time when General Meade rode up and reported the situation to be serious, but General Grant remarked with an impatient gesture (pushing up the front of his cap), that Burnside's corps had not been put in action and could be used if necessary.

¹ At this time and thenceforward a picket line was very likely to be a skirmish line in the Army of Northern Virginia, and the two terms came to be used interchangeably.

ment by the right flank along the line of works, and were ordered to watch the troops with whom we there made connection and follow them. So the men were kept under arms and strictly prohibited from making fires or noise or any unusual signs, such as rattling of canteens or metal that might betray our motions to the enemy.

About nine o'clock P. M. our neighbors began to move off by the right flank, and we followed, the skirmish line also facing to the right and keeping between us and the enemy outside the works. The line of breastworks behind which we marched ran for the most part through rugged woods, and the night being very dark, horsemen and foot-soldiers were continually stumbling over stumps, running into trees, or falling into gullies, with which the easily washed soil of the country abounded. We seldom marched one or two hundred yards without being arrested by delays in front, nor were these halts long enough or of any certainty, so that the men could snatch a little rest. So the night wore on, the line of works seeming interminable, up and down hill and winding about through the desolate Wilderness country. About half an hour before dawn there was a longer halt, and the men lay down in their places and took a brief repose.

At six or seven o'clock, May 8, we resumed the march, striking off from the works to the right oblique, and presently found ourselves on a road which led in the direction of Spottsylvania. The troops we had been following during the night had disappeared while we were resting. For a couple of miles we were compelled to pass through a burning forest, the smoke and heat of which were very distressing, particularly as there was a scarcity of water, this being on the ridge between the waters of the Rapidan and Mattaponi. We now moved for a time in the reverse direction, on the identical road by which, one year before, Jackson had led his command to make his celebrated flank attack at Chancellorsville, and the men were continually recognizing old landmarks

and recalling to each other the associations of that time.¹ By midday we were becoming much exhausted, and the rear guard had a difficult and most disagreeable duty to perform in keeping the men from falling out. The dust, too, was very distressing. But at such a time the plea of physical exhaustion had to be disregarded, and stragglers were urged and made to move on by persuasion and almost by force.

Later in the day we struck across the country and got into another road leading to Spottsylvania Court House.²

¹ I think there may have been some mistake about this, and that Jackson's route lay further to the east. The men thought so, however.

² The foregoing account having been read by Mr. J. C. Ropes, of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, and author of the late history of the Campaign of 1862, it was by him sent to Colonel Lyman of General Meade's staff, who returned it with a letter, from which the following is an extract:—

My dear Ropes: . . . I lent the Wilderness part to Gen. Peirson who was Lt. Col. of the 39th Mass. and in the brigade whose fire stopped the pursuit across the "open space" and compelled the enemy to retire to the opposite edge of the woods. He says the account (for the time he was on the field) is very accurate. What is curious is that he too remembers the cries of the wounded. Several times he essayed, with volunteers, to go out with stretchers to bring them in, but was received by such a fire as compelled him to retreat. Only in the footnote on page 10 [page 103] of the Wilderness do I observe an inaccuracy. Gen. Edw. Johnson must have misunderstood Gen. Seth Williams (who gave him a good breakfast on May 12th). The army after the evening attack on the 6th corps was not "doubled on the centre," but the right was swung back. If the Gen. Collis there mentioned was Col. of the 114th Penn., I think his memory must deceive him. . . . Moreover, I rode with Gen. Meade on that occasion and heard what was said and have no remembrance of seeing Gen. Collis there. Gen. Grant could not have "pushed up the front of his cap," for he never wore a cap. Gen. Grant seemed a little worried, but Gen. Meade was as cool as possible. He said to me, "Nonsense! If they *have* broken our line, they can do nothing more to-night," or words to that effect; and he treated two officers of the 6th corps, who rode in with panicky reports, to very sarcastic remarks. He told Grant he had ordered the Pennsylvania Reserves to the right and that was enough. Neither before nor after did I know of so profound and uncalled for a panic as this one of a portion of the 6th corps. . . .

Truly yours,

THEODORE LYMAN.

III. SPOTTSYLVANIA COURT HOUSE

About an hour before sunset, May 8, Johnson's division, with Steuart's brigade in the lead, was not more than two miles from Spottsylvania Court House, and the tired men had just been cheered by an assurance passed down the column that they were presently going into camp, when firing was heard to the left oblique and news came that Rodes's division, which preceded us, had found itself in collision with the enemy. The column was turned from the road in that direction and formed in line of battle in rear of Rodes, but although under the sharp fire which was directed against him, we were not brought into action. About dark the firing gradually ceased, both sides apparently holding their own, and our division was moved forward and to the right so as to connect with and extend the line from Rodes's right. By ten o'clock the whole division was stretched out in some fashion, and was ordered to rectify the alignment and throw up breastworks; but the ground was thickly wooded, and on the right, which was held by Steuart's brigade, was covered with low spreading pines absolutely impenetrable in places; so that, after moving forwards and backwards, and closing up to the left and to the right, we got very much tangled, and the prospect of making a straight or well-connected line in the worn-out condition of the men became worse and worse. The voices of Generals Johnson and Steuart were heard far in the night, but in the thicket and extreme darkness the men could not see them nor could they see each other, and staff officers could not ride through, so that, tired, hungry, and sleepy, they finally sank down where each one happened to find himself.

At daylight, May 9, the line was rectified and the men went to work intrenching. The enemy soon opened an artillery fire from opposite the left of the division, which, enfilading us on

the right in a measure, annoyed us a good deal, although we were not visible to them. When the breastworks of Steuart's brigade were half finished, the engineers of the army came along and ordered us to abandon them and construct a new line turning off at right angles from the front of the rest of the division and the army. This exposed us much more than before to the enemy's fire, which, now passing over the heads of the brigades on our left, for whom it was meant, took us in flank and rear, so that it was only during the intervals when the fire slackened that we were able to do any work. When completed, therefore, our intrenchments were constructed for protection from side and behind quite as much as for defense in front, and consisted of a chain or series of deep pits. We also cleared away the pines and brush for a space in front, and made out of them a very tolerable abatis with the interlaced branches. Having few tools the labor was tedious, and it was not until the middle of the next day that the works were sufficient for protection. Meanwhile cooking details were sent back to the wagons who brought up cooked rations, consisting in the main of cold corn-bread.

Towards evening on May 10 there was some sharp firing on the skirmish line on the left of the angle, and the artillery opened with such violence as to cause us much inconvenience, although I believe little or no loss of life in our command. 'A little before sunset a message came that a part of the line of Rodes's division, on Johnson's left, had been captured by a sudden attack, and our brigade was ordered to his support in all possible haste. The distance by a straight line across the angle was only a few hundred yards, but the emergency seemed so great that the head of our column was pushed on at a double-quick, leaving the rear to follow as best it could, so that the men reached the scene of action with a good deal of ardor, but much exhausted and strung out. Several dead bodies in blue uniform were passed over a couple of hundred

yards, or nearly inside the line, showing that the enemy had penetrated thus far, but they were now limiting themselves, or limited, to holding some two hundred yards of the works, from which they poured a destructive fire to their front and up and down the line. Without waiting for the rear, our advance was hurriedly formed and pushed forward, but being only a few hundred men we were not strong enough to retake the ground. The greater part bore off to the right, and, reaching the works about where the enemy's left was, made a number of attempts to charge down the line.

I saw many instances of conspicuous gallantry on the part of individuals, but the fire, possibly in part from our own friends on the other side of the gap, was so withering that the men recoiled from each charge and could only hold their own. Lieutenant William Steuart, who had just been appointed aide-de-camp to the general, his brother, but had not yet been so announced and was not, I think, in uniform, attracted my attention by the very daring manner in which he headed these charges, first attempting to lead the men forward down the inside of the line, then jumping upon and walking along the top of the breastwork itself, and finally leaping upon the outer side and endeavoring to induce them to sweep down the enemy's own side. Captain George Williamson, assistant adjutant-general, I saw exposing himself in the same way. Lieutenant Lyon of the 3d North Carolina seized the regimental colors, and, calling on the men to follow, rushed with the flag so far in advance that he appeared in imminent danger of being shot down by our own fire, if not by the enemy. Captain John Badger Brown of the same regiment, one of our best officers, fell badly wounded, and many other officers and men were killed or disabled. We regained only a small part of the works, and it became evident that the recapture should be made by a fresh body of troops marching squarely up to the gap. General Steuart so stated to General Johnson,

who accordingly rode off in search of such assistance, while we desisted from further attempts and confined ourselves to holding what we already had. We lay down behind the works, receiving in silence the enfilading fire which continued to come down them, whether from foe or friend, and watching to repel any attack that might be made in front. Several times it was reported that such an attack was being made or threatened, and the men rose up and fired, but in the dusk which was coming on I could see nothing. A more disagreeable half hour could not well have been spent. Presently Captain Williamson passed along and informed me that General Steuart was about to re-form the brigade about a hundred yards in the rear, expressing a quite alarming wish that I might not be shot down in passing over! Here about one fourth were got together; and learning that other troops were passing up, and not liking the idea of failing to participate with them, the general led his command forward. But when we reached the works the last enemy had been driven out, or more probably were withdrawn, and about ten o'clock we returned to our own position, which had all the while been bare of defenders except the skirmish line and artillery.¹

This affair impressed us with the necessity of strengthening our line, and next morning, May 11, the men fell to work with increased energy, particularly on the abatis, the importance of which in detaining and throwing into confusion an enemy within point-blank range they now fully appreciated. It is a mistake made by non-combatants only to suppose that a field breastwork is any material obstacle of itself to a charging enemy, it being a cover only to the men behind it. Indeed, with all its advantages in economizing life, fighting

¹ Colonel Lyman of Meade's staff writes: "The capture of a part of the line on May 10 was the assault by Upton's brigade of the 6th corps. By gross neglect *somewhere* that beautiful attack was unsupported. If it had been, the whole salient would have been captured. Upton withdrew unmolested at dark, and took nearly 1000 prisoners. Going over that front in the spring of 1866, I found it thickly strewn with sabots from the enemy's batteries."

behind slight field-works has some disadvantages also. Give a man protection for his body, and the temptation is very strong to put his head under cover too.

My observation during this and other campaigns was that behind works not a few men will crouch down doing nothing. Many will fire far above the heads of their assailants, often at an angle of forty-five degrees, and few, comparatively, will raise their heads and shoulders fairly above the rampart and level their pieces with effect. When an enemy reaches the other side of the work, in five cases out of six it is carried; whereas the object and advantage of an abatis is to detain and disorder the assailants while the defendants, although not firing with much accuracy, yet inflict loss and suffer comparatively none. But generally speaking, the result, however favorable to those behind the works, is only a repulse, perhaps bloody, and is not followed up with consequences such as attend a victory in the open field.

During the morning I rode over to our field hospital, about two miles distant, to see how the wounded of the evening before were getting on. Two of our best company commanders, Captain Brown and another, were among them, but doing well. The sergeant-major of the 3d North Carolina, a boy who was a favorite with all, was fast sinking, attended by his father, a surgeon in another regiment. In his last conscious moments he was thinking and talking of his mother, whose only son I was told he was.

Our senior surgeon gave me a most refreshing cup of hot tea, the taste of which had been long unknown, and I also had the luxury of a change of underclothing, having been marching and lying in the trenches, with the same clothing on, for a week. Riding back I saw General Lee examining that part of Rodes's line which had been broken the day before.

Before giving an account of the disaster of the following morning, it will be well to describe briefly the character of

our part of the line and the disposition of the forces behind it.¹

Of the four brigades of Johnson's division, Walker's (the Stonewall) was on the left, next to which was Stafford's, then J. M. Jones's, and Steuart's held the right. Generals Stafford and Jones, two very gallant men, had been killed in the first day's battle, and a part of the brigade of the latter was said to be a good deal disheartened by its losses and for want of a commander. All four had suffered heavily since the opening of the campaign, and I do not think they now averaged 1000 men behind the works, more probably 800 or 900. The three brigades first named held a continuation of the main army line, and running northerly, but Steuart's turned off at an angle of ninety degrees from Jones's right. There was no support or continuation of the line from Steuart's right (except pickets), there being an interval—one mile we supposed at the time—between us and part of Hill's corps, now commanded by Early. There were no reserves. In Steuart's front the ground was densely wooded with oak and pine, with many ravines and spring-heads, and we had our skirmishers well out without having felt an enemy, except on the left. The line of the other brigades ran through oaks principally, and a short distance in front the ground was partly wooded and partly open, but always rough. The point of the angle was on elevated ground, both open and sloping towards the enemy, giving the only good position for artillery along the line; and both for this reason and because it was impossible to concentrate a heavy infantry fire from it, the salient was occupied by six or eight pieces. There were also two guns in Steuart's centre, and probably others along the left of the division. Behind the division line the ground was wooded, but in rear of Doles' (the adjoining brigade of Rodes's division) there was a considerable clearing.

¹ See W. R. Atlas, plate LXXXIII—3.

There had been several showers during the day, and towards evening the air was damp and heavy and began to be foggy.

A little before sunset, May 11, we were surprised to notice all the artillery in the salient and our centre limber up and move to the rear; and asking an officer what this meant, he replied he did not know except that they were ordered back to camp. We discussed this movement with some uneasiness, but supposed other batteries would relieve them. It is well known that our artillery at this time was not controlled by the infantry commanders, as during the first two years of the war, but separately organized into battalions and larger commands with its own line of officers. I suppose, however, that corps commanders must have exercised some authority in time of battle and active operations.

Not long after dark a message came in from the skirmish line that there was and had been for some time a steady rumbling in front, indicating that a large force was being massed there or passing around to the right. Captain George Williamson, assistant adjutant-general, and myself, the only two staff officers present, immediately walked out some distance, and afterwards stood for half an hour on the breastworks listening to the subdued roar or noise, plainly audible in the still, heavy night air, like distant falling water, or machinery. If night has the advantage of covering a military movement to the eye, it nevertheless often discovers it to the ear.

Convinced, accordingly, that an important movement was on foot, and believing that it portended an attack on our weak angle in the morning (and I have an indistinct recollection that a deserter had passed over to the enemy shortly before, who, we apprehended, might have disclosed its condition), we went back and reported to General Steuart, by whom a dispatch was immediately sent to General Johnson to this effect: —

Major R. W. Hunter, Assistant Adjutant-General, —

Major: The enemy is moving and probably massing in our front, and we expect to be attacked at daylight. The artillery along our front has been withdrawn, by whose orders I know not, and I beg that it be sent back immediately.

GEORGE H. STEUART,
Brigadier-General, commanding.¹

A circular was then sent around to our regimental commanders, stating that we would probably be attacked in the morning, and ordering them to have their men in the rifle-pits half an hour before daylight.

On the 12th our men were in readiness before daylight, and so early that at least one company commander — I think Captain Cantwell of the 3d North Carolina — afterwards told me he made his men draw their loads and clean their guns while waiting. Owing to the fog day was late in breaking, and even then there was no sign of an attack, which I began to believe would not be made. But presently there came the sound of a distant cheer just off the salient, followed as suddenly by a deep silence, the suspense of which was most trying, especially as we now eagerly looked and wished for the arrival of our artillery, which should have been there to open

¹ The next day when we were prisoners together, and often afterwards, General Johnson informed me that on receiving the dispatch he immediately sent it, or one similar, to General Ewell, commanding the corps, urgently requesting that the artillery be returned. And General Ewell, or his adjutant-general, told me on my exchange from prison that he received and forwarded such a dispatch to General Lee, whose headquarters were not far distant. Mentioning these facts to Colonel Charles Marshall, military secretary, after the war, he said he well remembered the circumstances, and that General Lee, on receiving the dispatch, remarked to his staff: "See, gentlemen, how difficult it is to have certain information, or how to determine what to do. Here is a dispatch from General Johnson stating that the enemy are massing in his front, and at the same time I am informed by General Early that they are moving around our left. Which am I to believe?" — that, however, General Lee ordered the artillery to be back at daylight.

in the direction of the cheering. Then came a few dropping shots from that part of our picket line which was off the angle, marking the progress and direction of the column of attack. Presently a blue line appeared in our front, to the right of the salient, and our men of Steuart's brigade delivered a volley, perhaps more, which had the effect of causing it to disappear. I do not think this was a very considerable body, but one which must have missed the corner of the angle and passed down in front of our works inside our picket line, just at the abatis.¹ But perhaps I have underrated the force and persistence of this part of the assault.

About this time our artillery came up, rather slowly, I thought, and unlimbered, but had not time to fire a shot, except the two pieces in our centre, which were discharged once or maybe twice. Musketry firing was now quite heavy where Jones's brigade adjoined us on our left, and soon a crowd of fugitives came pouring down our line of works from the angle, showing that something must have gone wrong in that quarter. I was at this time and had been near our centre. The two pieces of artillery in our centre now or shortly before fired their round of grape — as I knew from the hollow, rattling sound — but those in the angle had been overwhelmed as soon as unlimbered.² I saw Captain Williamson pass by from that direction, and knew from the expression of his face that something momentous had happened there, but had no time to stop or question him. Soon a cloud of blue uniforms came pressing down from the left along our works, in front of them, and by far the greater number, completely filling the space within the angle, and thus directly in our rear. The pits in our centre and right being deep and with traverses available for defense

¹ At the time we were captured our pickets, I was told, were bringing in some straggling prisoners, with a result very much like the scene between the policeman and pirates in the opera of the "Pirates of Penzance."

² A captain in the 1st North Carolina, which was on our left, afterwards told me that seeing the guns in possession of the enemy, he ordered his men to shoot at the horses, which they did with effect, to prevent their being carried off.

in front, flank, and rear, I supposed they might be held or the enemy checked until reinforcements came up, as on the evening of the 10th; and therefore, standing on the brink of one of them, I pushed passing fugitives into it until it was full and then jumped in. I remember a Federal soldier came striding down the top of the work foremost of his comrades, shouting and brandishing his gun above his head, when a man of the 10th Virginia, — Bragonier, I think, — in obedience to orders to fire, did so, with effect, according to my recollection. The smoke of the discharge seemed as if it would never float away in the heavy air, and I apprehended we would pay a penalty for our temerity, for in a few moments we were surrounded on all sides. The Union soldiers did bring their bayonets down with a threatening appearance, but it was only for the purpose of sweeping away the bayonets of our own men, which were resting on the edge of the work, and we were ordered to scramble out.

Our stream of prisoners passed back through and alongside of the still swarming column of attack which appeared to me to be a dense mass without much order, about a hundred yards in breadth; and it occurred to me that if our artillery had been in position, it could have played with terrible effect, even by commencing to fire at the sound of cheering.¹

The attack was well planned and executed, but it is a mistake to suppose, as sometimes stated, that the Confederate troops were taken by surprise. The sound of the cheering would have given time enough to get into the trenches, but in fact they were prepared, as above shown. It may be that some were interrupted at their breakfasts, as that meal was then and generally a scanty one, perhaps little but corn-

¹ Since the war General Collis of the Union army has informed me that the attack was directed on the angle in column of regiments closed in mass, but that in passing so far over rough ground the men necessarily got into some confusion and crowded up. He also said that strict orders had been given to keep silence, but the ardor of the men broke into cheering, for which they were rated afterwards.

bread and water, and often dispatched in line or waiting for action, with little or no derangement.¹ Holding a salient in the shape of a right angle, and having a thin line and no reserve, or support even, on the right, the disaster could only have been averted, if at all against so strong an assault, by the services of artillery, supported by a force drawn from some other part of the line. The artillery alone might possibly have checked the assaulting column long enough for such a support to come up; it would certainly, at least, have inflicted a severe loss.

The line was broken on the left of the angle, and Steuart's brigade was thus taken in rear and flank.

The long struggle afterwards for the possession of this coveted corner of ground, perhaps the bloodiest scene of the war, in which trees and logs were splintered into "basket stuff" and bodies of the wounded and dead mangled and torn by the ceaseless storm of bullets, has been often described. It was not my fortune to be an eye-witness.

¹ Details of men were from time to time sent to the wagons in rear, who brought up cooked rations swung in blankets.

V

BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

BY

BREVET LIEUTENANT-COLONEL WILLIAM W. SWAN
U. S. A.

Read before the Society February 9, 1880

BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

ALL the night of the 3d day of May, 1864, at any house on the Stevensburg Road leading from Culpeper Court House in Virginia to Germanna Ford on the Rapidan, or on the road further to the north leading to Ely's Ford on the same river, could be heard the hum of moving troops and the peculiar rattle of cup and canteen which is heard only in war.

The Army of the Potomac was moving out to grapple once more with the only foe it ever knew, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. It moved under a new commander, unknown to it save by reputation, although its leader of the preceding year still retained nominal command.

Late in the preceding winter Major-General Grant, who had earned his reputation and his rank in the West, had been promoted to be lieutenant-general, and early in March, 1864, had been assigned by the President to the command of all the armies of the United States, then comprising about 1,000,000 men. Towards the end of March he had established his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac, and from there he projected, and to a certain extent directed, the future campaigns of the war. Remaining with that army he became so identified with it that thenceforward its operations were known to the world as Grant's campaign against Richmond.

It is with the first battle fought by the Army of the Potomac under the immediate supervision of General Grant that we have to do this evening.

For a proper understanding of any battle it is necessary to take into account not only the troops actually engaged or in the vicinity of the battle-field, but also the general condition

of the belligerents, — their comparative numbers and wealth, the entire strength of their respective armies, the location of their territories relatively to each other and the strategic points in each, and their previous campaigns. But with all these things I must assume, indeed I believe, you are more familiar than I am myself. I am expected to confine myself to the operations of the opposing armies during the two days of the campaign of the spring of 1864 which are known as the Battle of the Wilderness. It is absolutely necessary, however, for me to state, at least somewhat generally, the positions of the two armies just before the campaign began.

General Early in a pamphlet published soon after the war says that on the 3d of May, 1864, "General Lee held the southern bank of the Rapidan River in Orange County, with his right resting near the mouth of Mine Run, and his left extending to Liberty Mills, on the road from Gordonsville to the Shenandoah Valley; while the crossings of the river on the right and the roads on the left were watched by cavalry. Ewell's corps was on the right, Hill's on the left, and two divisions of Longstreet's corps were encamped in the rear near Gordonsville." General Lee had about 60,000 men under his command of all arms.¹

It is sufficient to say that the Army of the Potomac was encamped in Culpeper County, north of the Rapidan and Robertson rivers. Some of the troops had been stretched along the railroad towards Washington, but by the night of the 3d of May they had pretty much closed up on the main body. The army numbered about 120,000 all told.¹ But in

¹ Compare Colonel Thomas L. Livermore's *Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America, 1861-65*, second edition. Wilderness, May 5-7.

UNION ARMY		CONFEDERATE ARMY	
Effectives estimated.....	101,895	Effectives estimated	61,025
Killed	2246	Killed and wounded (minimum estimate on partial returns) . .	7,750
Wounded.....	12,037		
Missing.....	3383		

— Note by EDITOR.

comparing the numbers engaged on the two sides in the Battle of the Wilderness, it is hardly fair to say that the Union troops numbered nearly three to one of their antagonists. The battle was an infantry battle, — artillery could not be employed, and cavalry was not to any extent, — and then great reduction must be made for those whose duties kept them in the rear. General Meade has said that he had from 75,000 to 80,000 infantry whom he could use in the battle, and I take his statement as correct.

Reduction must be made in estimating Lee's forces, but undoubtedly they are small in comparison. He probably had considerably over 40,000¹ infantry who were actually engaged in the battle.

And I will here add that I believe that Lee's army was made up of better material than Grant's. They were native-born citizens, and there is a great deal in that. Can we who were of the Army of the Potomac believe that the men we led would have been as patient and enduring of hardship as were the rebels, if, like the rebels, they had been but half fed and half clothed? I like not to speak in disparagement of the many brave men from other nations who fought under our flag, but I do believe in Americans. And I think that any American to-day must have his heart swell with pride when he remembers that there are native-born citizens in any section of the country who can spurn death as did the Confederates at Gettysburg. It is true troops of ours have shown equal bravery. A Confederate officer told me not long since that at Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor he might have walked along the front of the Confederate lines and at every step placed his foot upon the body of a soldier clad in blue lying there dead. Yet candor compels me to say that in my opinion the men in the ranks in the Army of Northern Virginia, as a whole, were superior to those who carried the musket in the Army of the Potomac. And

¹ This number, I am now inclined to think, is an underestimate of the rebel force actually engaged. April 6, 1880. W. W. S.

surely Lee's army was not weakened, as was Grant's, by having in it foreigners who were imported for the sole purpose of serving in the stead of men from whom military service was due the country by reason of their birthplace.

In enumerating the forces under Grant I must not forget Burnside's army. It counted 20,000 men, but was of little service. It was made up of new troops. Our government had a way, peculiar to itself among all civilized nations, of organizing new troops by themselves, instead of sending them as recruits to old organizations. It is sufficient for the present to say that, the two armies being thus situated and thus made up, Grant determined to turn Lee's right.

As our army moved to the left, it will be convenient for me to speak first of the movements of the 2d corps, which held our left during the two days of fighting. At the head of that corps rode Hancock. There are different opinions as to the merits of this officer, but all will admit that in the thick of a fight he was superb. Thousands of brave soldiers on many a battle-field have cheered him as he appeared in their midst, and every man who saw him felt that he was under a charm.

The division commanders were Barlow, Gibbon, Birney, and Mott; while among the brigade commanders were Hays of Pennsylvania, Webb, Miles, and Carroll. There were 27,000 officers and men for duty, including nine batteries.

The head of the column reached Ely's Ford at midnight. It had been preceded by Gregg's cavalry, and the infantry on coming up had found the cavalry well across and the pontoon bridge nearly down. The enemy had offered no resistance to the passage of the river by the cavalry. The infantry began to cross the bridge before daylight, and taking the road to Chancellorsville, had begun to arrive at that place by nine o'clock in the morning of the 5th. At noon the whole corps was up. No further advance was made, and the troops bivouacked upon the battle-field of the 3d of May of the preceding year. A part of the cavalry moved well out towards Freder-

icksburg, and a part proceeded in a southerly direction as far as Todd's Tavern.

The 5th and 6th corps moved down the Stevensburg Road to Germanna Ford, the 5th corps in advance, led by Warren, at that time surely having the reputation of being a dashing, energetic soldier. His division commanders were Griffin, Robinson, Crawford, and Wadsworth.

Preceding these corps was Wilson's division of cavalry, 3000 strong, and accompanied by two batteries of horse artillery, of six guns each. Wilson reached the ford at three o'clock in the morning, and immediately threw over one of his brigades, which without resistance drove away a small cavalry force of the rebels observing the ford. By five o'clock his whole division was across, a pontoon bridge had been put down, and Griffin's division of the 5th corps was crossing. When Griffin was well over, Wilson pushed up the Germanna Plank Turnpike. Just here on the Pike, a few rods towards Chancellorsville, is the Old Wilderness Tavern. Hence Wilson sent a strong party west up the Turnpike to Robertson's Tavern, and another to the south by the Germanna and Brock roads.

He himself with the main force moved by a wood road out to Parker's Store on the Orange Plank Road, where his whole force was to concentrate. His instructions contemplated that the force sent to Robertson's Tavern, after driving the enemy from that place, should march across the country to Parker's Store; and accordingly there was no cavalry force on the *Pike* during the night of the 4th, nor thereafter. Wilson sent a strong reconnoitring party up the Plank Road towards Mine Run, and bivouacked at Parker's Store with the balance of his force. The reconnoitring party found only a small cavalry force watching the crossing of Mine Run, and from some prisoners, taken by the troops who had come in from Robertson's Tavern on the other road, it seemed that the enemy was not expecting a movement in that direction.

In the mean time Warren, with the 5th corps, was pushing

on to the Old Wilderness Tavern. His progress was slow, for the troops were somewhat fatigued with their night march, and some of them had been marching almost without cessation from a long distance beyond the Rappahannock. Then it was necessary to march with flankers, and it was difficult for them to march through the low pines, scrub oaks, vines, briars, and bushes, all growing in one tangle throughout that region. However, Warren was to go no further than the Old Wilderness Tavern, and he had his whole corps well in hand at that place early in the afternoon. The leading division had arrived between three and four o'clock, and had been thrown a mile and a half up the Pike towards Robertson's Tavern. Here the division bivouacked, Ayres's brigade on the right of the road, Bartlett's on the left, and Sweitzer in the rear. Their position is indicated on the map by the blue line of works where it crosses the Plank Road. Pickets were thrown out, but not with such care as should be exercised in the presence of the enemy.

You will not think it out of place for me here to recount what I remember myself. At this time I was upon the staff of General Ayres, and was directed to put out the pickets on the right of the road. I did so, placing the left of the line on the road at the nearer edge of the open field half a mile in front of the troops, the right extending some distance beyond the field into the woods, but how far I do not remember. I do remember, however, that I was told that I need not be troubled about our right, for it was said the pickets of the 6th corps, although not yet up, would find the right and prolong it. I remember also that on going back to the left of my line I found that Bartlett's picket line was considerably further out than that of Ayres, being nearly at the further end of the field on the opposite side of the road. It was then getting late, and the officer in charge of Bartlett's pickets and I thought that it was not worth while to disturb our men, and we let the lines remain as they were, he putting a strong force

on the road at his right and a line along the road. I mention this to show that it did not occur to us that a battle was to be fought in the morning, and I have been somewhat particular in describing the position of Griffin's division, because it was the first engaged.

In the night march the 6th corps had followed close upon the 5th. At its head rode the unassuming Sedgwick, now crossing the familiar Rapidan for his last time, but soon to be ferried over a wider, colder river, across which none but the ferryman returns, and to leave behind him more sad hearts than mourned for any other officer killed in battle during the war.

His division commanders were Wright, Getty, and Ricketts. The corps merely crossed the river on the 4th day of May, the greater part going into camp early in the afternoon from a mile and a half to two miles up the Germanna Road. One brigade recrossed the river to look after the trains, but nothing was done with reference to the position of the 5th corps.

No one was expecting a serious encounter with the enemy the next day, assuredly not even the lieutenant-general commanding. Yet although it is represented by Swinton, who was with Grant at the time, that Grant was hurrying through the Wilderness in order to avoid a battle in that region, I believe that it was Grant's intention to have the whole Army of the Potomac substantially in line of battle long before the close of the 5th of May, ready to fight, if necessary, and that the position contemplated did not differ essentially from the first position occupied by the Union army in the Mine Run campaign, excepting that the left was to extend much further than the rebel right had then extended.

Lee on the morning of the 4th discovered that Grant was crossing the Rapidan at Germanna and Ely's fords, and resolved to assume the offensive. His headquarters were near Orange Court House. From that place two broad roads run in an easterly direction towards Fredericksburg, uniting about

two miles west of Chancellorsville. The one to the north is known as the Orange Turnpike. The other is called the Orange Plank Road. At the point of the battle-field they are something over two miles apart, but beyond they converge rapidly to their junction. The Germanna Road from Germanna Ford crosses the Pike at Old Wilderness Tavern, five miles west of Chancellorsville, and ends in the Plank Road some three miles west of Chancellorsville. A mile east of the Old Wilderness Tavern lies the head of the Brock Road. Starting here, this road runs southerly, crossing the Germanna and Orange Plank Roads, the latter about four miles west of Chancellorsville, and then on to Todd's Tavern and Spottsylvania Court House and Richmond. Todd's Tavern is said to be seven miles below the intersection of the Orange Plank and Brock roads. The road from Chancellorsville to Todd's Tavern is by the Furnaces. A longer road is by way of Piney Branch Church. Another road from the Furnaces comes into the Brock Road about two miles south of the intersection of the Brock Road and Orange Plank Road. This intersection of roads I shall frequently speak of as the cross-roads. It was by this last-named road from the Furnaces, the Brock Road, and the Orange Pike, that Stonewall Jackson moved, when he turned Hooker's right on the 2d of May the year before. From Germanna Ford to Richmond the direct route is by the Germanna and Brock roads.

Lee marched to strike our army at the junction of the Orange Pike and Germanna Road, and the junction of the Orange Plank Road and Brock Road. Ewell's corps came down the Pike, and Hill's down the Plank Road. Longstreet, marching from Gordonsville, was on the Catharpin Road, a road whose general direction is parallel with that of the Pike and Plank roads. The Catharpin Road crosses the Brock Road at Todd's Tavern. Ewell went into camp about four miles east of Mine Run, but Hill did not succeed in reaching a point so far east on the Plank Road. Our army was not aware

that it was in the immediate presence of the enemy, and the Confederates only knew that they were approaching our general line of march.

Returning now to our army, we left Wilson with his cavalry division in bivouac at Parker's Store. Five o'clock in the morning found him moving by wood roads to Craig's Meeting House, on the Catharpin Road, having left one regiment to hold the position at Parker's Store until relieved by the infantry, when it was to rejoin him at Craig's Meeting House.

Five o'clock of the morning of the 5th found Hancock sending out the head of his column from Chancellorsville to march by the Furnaces and Todd's Tavern to Shady Grove Church. It found one division of the 5th corps already moving out on the road from the Lacy house to Parker's Store, and the remaining divisions preparing to follow. The pickets of Griffin's division had been ordered to assemble, that they might be brought into their respective camps and be ready to march with the commands to which they belonged. The leading division moving out towards Parker's Store was made up of two brigades of the Pennsylvania Reserves, a body of men as well known to the country through the press as any other troops. They had been commanded by McCall, by Reynolds, and by Meade, and had earned a fair reputation. But now they were to be mustered out at the end of twenty-seven days, and were commanded by Brigadier-General S. W. Crawford. They crossed Wilderness Run near the Lacy house on a bridge built by the pioneers, who had also built two other bridges over the run, and three bridges over branches of the run, and were cutting out the trees on the sides of the road to make everywhere a pathway at least twenty feet wide. The road, though narrow, was a very fair one for that part of the country, most of it exceedingly good, although a traveler unfamiliar with such a region would be apt to lose the road-bed where it crosses open fields.

Wadsworth's division followed Crawford's, and in rear of

Wadsworth marched a portion of Robinson's. Crawford, in a couple of hours, reached Chewning's farm, a commanding plateau, the best fighting ground in the whole region. The map shows its extent. On three sides the approaches are abrupt. To the south in the direction of the Plank Road there is a gentle descent, which is covered by the dense thickets for which the Wilderness is famous. Through this wood, however, are two good roads to the Plank Road, one coming out at Parker's Store, and the other at Widow Tapp's field.

When Crawford reached Chewning's, he heard firing in the direction of Parker's Store, and halted.

We shall see presently that the enemy was stirring early on the Pike. On the Plank Road he was no less active. On the Pike, however, we had no cavalry to tell us of his movements. On the Plank Road we had cavalry, but no infantry for the cavalry to fall back upon. Hammond with his 500 men was contesting the road with infantry belonging to Hill's division, and the brisk firing heard was his. Hammond, knowing the route Crawford was to take, sent back for assistance, representing that Crawford would have time to occupy the strong position at Parker's Store; but Crawford evidently thought otherwise, and indeed it was but a short time before the enemy was passing along what might now be called his front.

Crawford sent forward a couple of companies to reconnoitre. In the official history of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, published by the State of Pennsylvania,¹ I read:—

"Colonel Tally was ordered to take two companies to reconnoitre the position in his front. Approaching the Plank Road, he was fired upon by a corps of rebel troops coming up the road. Quickly returning, the facts were reported to General Crawford, who ordered him to withdraw his regiment and return to the main line of the army."

I think, however, that Crawford did rather more than this.

¹ History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-65. By S. P. Bates, 1869.

From all I have read, I believe that he did throw out a skirmish line, which advanced through the woods to within some 200 yards of the Plank Road and became involved with the enemy's flankers. It also appears that the enemy sent a small force up the road towards Chewning's, who fired into the rear of parties sent out by Crawford. I go into these details because the position at Chewning's was an important one, and much could have been made of it.

But long before the time at which Crawford arrived at Chewning's, the enemy had been discovered coming down the Pike in force. I remember myself that the break in Griffin's picket line was immediately rectified, that the division was formed in line of battle, and began to throw up a breastwork of logs and earth, and that Generals Griffin, Ayres, and Bartlett rode out to near the picket line, whence the enemy could be seen leaving the road and entering the woods to the right and left. I know that generals and staff officers all thought that the enemy was in strong force. I remember that word to that effect was sent back to General Warren, and I am sure that not long after I knew that Griffin had been ordered to attack. I think I carried the order from Griffin to Ayres to attack. I remember that Ayres sent me back to Griffin to say that in his judgment we ought to wait, for the enemy was about to attack us and we had a strong position; and I remember that Griffin went again to the front, and then sent me back to say to General Warren that he was averse to making an attack. I don't remember his words, but it was a remonstrance. I think I went twice to General Warren with that message. The last time I met him on the road, and I remember that he answered me as if fear was at the bottom of my errand. I remember my indignation. It was afterwards a common report in the army that Warren had just had unpleasant things said to him by General Meade, and that General Meade had just heard the bravery of his army questioned.

However, the attack was not made by Griffin until Warren

came up, although in the mean time his troops had advanced to near the edge of the open fields, shown on the map as half a mile or so in front of the Union breastworks.

A little before one o'clock the charge was made in two and three lines, the regiments resting on the Pike starting first, and those to the right and left taking up the movement as soon as they saw it begun. The density of the woods prevented orders from being given by brigades. The staff officers had difficulty in carrying the orders to regimental commanders, and I feel certain that some of the regiments went forward merely because they saw others leave the wood.

The right flank of the corps was still in the air, extending but about half the front of a brigade to the right of the Pike. Crawford was still at Chewning's, where he had thrown up breastworks, one brigade facing to the west, and the other to the south; for Confederate troops were still passing along the Plank Road. Wadsworth and Robinson, who we have seen followed Crawford out from the Lacy house, were in line of battle along the road, Wadsworth's men being mostly in the open field to the right of Chewning's. His left was on Wilderness Run. Robinson was on Wadsworth's *left*. All were to go forward. And the orders to those divisions which had not yet seen the enemy were to advance due west, keep closed up to the right, and attack the enemy when found.

The result on the right was what might have been expected. The attack was made by good troops and with much spirit, but the exposed flank was fatal to success. The brigade of regulars, though under a murderous fire after it reached the middle of the open space and began a slight ascent, entered the opposite wood in perfect alignment.

Soon the two lines which had charged were fighting as one, and had gained a few yards, when it was found that they were flanked, and in five minutes more all but the killed and wounded had run back to the edge of the wood on the side of the field from which they started, where they were

speedily re-formed behind a line which had been held in reserve.

The brigade immediately on the left of the road did better, driving the enemy through the wood in great confusion nearly half a mile, when, finding itself alone, the regulars having given way, and the division on the left being it was not known where, the brigade was compelled to retire. The men were at all times under control. When this charge was made two guns were run forward on the Plank Road, and went into position part way up the rise beyond the open field on the right. The retreat of the regulars caused them to be abandoned.

Wadsworth advanced from the field which is to the right of Chewning's, the Maryland brigade and Baxter's brigade of Robinson's somewhere on his right, but not at first in close proximity to him, nor again very near Bartlett. The Maryland brigade, however, had not advanced far before it was ascertained that their skirmishers were marching in rear of another line of skirmishers, and in front of one of Wadsworth's brigades, and to which these skirmishers belonged. Luckily no mishap befell either brigade from this circumstance, and I relate the story as it is told by the commanding officer of one of the Maryland regiments in his diary, merely as an example of the difficulties attending the fighting a battle in the Wilderness. But Wadsworth's division soon did get into serious trouble. Passing over the Maryland brigade, it lost its direction, and when it struck the enemy, merely brushed him with its left flank, instead of meeting him square to the front. One brigade was instantly in fearful confusion, and the calamity spread to all the troops in that region. Every soldier, however, seemed to know the way to the Lacy house.

A staff officer returning at this time from Crawford says: "I found the little road crowded with stragglers and large crowds of soldiers passing out of the wood in great confusion

and almost panic-stricken ; some said they were flanked, others that they had suddenly come upon the rebels lying concealed in two lines of battle in the thick underbrush, and that our men had broken and run after the first volley. Cutler's brigade came back in pretty good order. Baxter's brigade came back in much less confusion. The stragglers mostly halted in the meadow bottoms around the Lacy house."

It had not been altogether a disgraceful retreat, for Private Opal of the 7th Indiana Volunteers in Cutler's brigade came back with the colors of the 50th Virginia.

As I have said, Crawford was also ordered to join in this forward movement. He sent one brigade, that of McCandless, who had been facing west. McCandless marched straight on, and of course never joined Wadsworth's left. After Wadsworth's disaster it became necessary to recall Crawford from his now isolated position at Chewning's. And that officer with the brigade, which he had retained at Chewning's, came back without difficulty, but McCandless was not so fortunate. The staff officer sent to recall him was captured, and McCandless was nearly surrounded. He finally escaped with considerable loss in killed and wounded, and nearly an entire regiment captured.

The enemy did not that day follow up as far as the road running through the fields near Chewning's. Both Crawford and McCandless had taken batteries with them which they brought back.

The rebel account of this part of the battle is as follows. General Early says :¹

"On the morning of the 5th, Ewell's corps was put in motion, my division bringing up the rear. A short distance from the Old Wilderness Tavern, and just in advance of the place where a road diverges to the left from the old Stone Pike to the Germanna Ford Pike, the enemy in heavy force

¹ The Last Year of the War, by Lieutenant-General Jubal A. Early, C. S. A., p. 16.

was encountered, and Jones's brigade, of Johnson's division, and Battles's brigade, of Rodes's, were driven back in some confusion. My division was ordered up and formed across the pike, Gordon's brigade being on the right of the road. This brigade, as soon as it was brought into line, was ordered forward, and advanced through a dense pine thicket in gallant style. In conjunction with Daniels's, Doles', and Ramseur's brigades of Rodes's division, it drove the enemy back with heavy loss, capturing several hundred prisoners, and gaining a commanding position on the right. Johnson at the same time was heavily engaged in his front, his division being on the left of the Pike and extending across the road [leading] to the Germanna Ford Road, which has been mentioned."

There was great indignation at headquarters over the loss of the two guns. An investigation was ordered to find out who was responsible. Colonel Wainwright, chief of artillery, says the guns were lost as honorably as guns can be lost; and this is true. Nearly all the horses were shot, Captain Winslow and Lieutenant Shelton both wounded, and the enemy between the guns before they were abandoned. The guns had been ordered forward by Griffin, who as an old artillery officer believed that guns could be fought anywhere. But Warren was present and must take the responsibility. The investigation took place before the guns were really captured, for it was while they stood there in the road, neither party venturing to move them, although in the night of the 6th the enemy did haul them within his lines. But no investigation was made as to the loss of the hundreds of men who remained between the lines. And there was a greater loss that day than either the guns or the men, — the loss of the victory which was within our grasp.

I have said that Warren's right brigade retreated from a want of support on its right. The enemy, however, did not follow up his success, owing to his own reverse on the other side of the Pike, the severe loss sustained by those who had

fought the regular brigade, and very likely in part owing to the close proximity, or the arrival, of the 6th corps. That corps may have got up in time to save the 5th corps from more serious disaster, but it did not appear until too late to make a crowning success of our attack upon the Pike. The glory of the 6th corps for that day, and indeed for the battle, was earned by the division under Getty over upon the Plank Road. Although there was some fighting by the main body of the corps, it was not of importance on the 5th. It merely occupied the attention of a considerable portion of the enemy, preventing him from going elsewhere. I shall therefore merely read a few extracts from reports of brigade commanders, with the hope to make it as clear as possible when the corps did arrive upon the ground, what was its subsequent position, and where the blame lies for the failure to wipe out the left wing of the rebel army on the 5th day of May, 1864, between the hour of noon and the going down of the sun.

I myself feel that it was the beginning of a reckless (brutal it used to be muttered in those days) way of fighting battles by hurrying into action one division, one brigade, or even a single regiment at a time, which characterized every contest from the crossing of the Rapidan to the battle at Cold Harbor.

Colonel Upton, commanding the 2d brigade of the 1st division says:¹ "The brigade was thrown out on a dirt road leading to Mine Run, to cover the right flank of the column while passing. Shortly after it moved by the left flank and formed in line on the left of the corps. About 11 A. M. orders were received to advance to the support of the 5th corps, then engaged with the enemy on the Orange Court House Pike, two miles from Wilderness Tavern. The advance was made by the right of wings, it being impossible to march in line of battle on account of the dense pines and nearly impenetrable thickets which met us on every hand. After

¹ 67 W. R. 665.

overcoming great difficulties on the march, connection was made with the right of the 5th corps."

He then says that he came suddenly upon the enemy and took thirty-five prisoners, and that he found himself some two hundred yards in advance of the line of the 5th corps, but the position being a fine one, the line was established there. He adds, and I again quote his own words: "The woods in front and around our position had been set on fire by the enemy to prevent our advance. The ground had previously been fought over and was strewed with wounded of both sides, many of whom must have perished in the flames, as corpses were found partly consumed."

This goes to show that Warren's line extended some considerable distance to the right of the open field, although I have never elsewhere seen, or heard of, the fire mentioned by Upton.

Major Dalton, A. A. A. G., of Wright's division, who signs the report of the division, says:¹ "Early the following morning the march was continued for a couple of miles or more, when the division was ordered to go into position parallel to the Plank Road [the Germanna Road] and advance to connect with the 5th corps on the left, which corps had begun to feel the lines of the enemy. The formation of the division being from left to right, — 2d brigade, Colonel E. Upton; 1st brigade, Colonel H. W. Brown; 3d brigade, Brigadier-General D. A. Russell." The 4th, Shaler's, had been left in the rear. He adds: "The skirmish line was moved [forward] with the greatest difficulty on account of the thick and tangled underbrush, which necessarily impeded the progress of the line, often breaking it completely. Having made connection with the 5th corps, the troops remained in position until the next morning, having been engaged only in brisk skirmish firing."

Major Dalton errs, however, in saying that there was merely

¹ 67 W. R. 659.

skirmishing by the 1st division, for Colonel Oliver Edwards, afterwards commanding the 3d brigade, says that¹ "having advanced upwards of two miles through dense woods in line of battle, [he] became hotly engaged with the enemy. The engagement continued with severity for more than an hour, and the fighting did not entirely cease until long after night-fall." He says he captured 300 of the enemy and the colors of the 25th Virginia Regiment.

In this latter statement he is supported by Brigadier-General Neill, who commanded a brigade of the 1st division. And General Neill adds: "Later in the day we made several attempts to advance our lines, but, owing to the strength of the enemy's position, failed in our object."

General Meade in his report says:² "Towards evening the 6th corps made its way through the dense thicket and formed connection with the 5th." But he is evidently incorrect in this statement. In this view, that Dalton is wrong, I am sustained by Confederate accounts.

Early says:³ "After the enemy had been repulsed, Hays's brigade was sent to Johnson's left, in order to participate in a forward movement, and it did move forward some half mile or so, encountering the enemy in force; but from some mistake, not meeting with expected coöperation except from one regiment of Jones's brigade (the 25th Virginia), the most of which was captured, it was drawn back to Johnson's line and took position on his left." He adds: "Pegram's brigade was subsequently sent to take position on Hays's left, and just before night a very heavy attack was made on its front, which was repulsed with severe loss to the enemy."

I will add here that Gordon's brigade, which had been so successful on the right, was towards night sent to the extreme left of the Confederate army.

¹ 67 W. R. 672.

² Ibid, 190.

³ The Last Year of the War, by Lieutenant-General J. A. Early, C. S. A., p. 16.

General Wright was in immediate command of these troops of the 6th corps. Besides his own division, he had under him Neill's brigade of the 2d division and Seymour's of the 3d. The other three of the 2d, Wheaton's, Grant's, and Eustis's, we shall see had gone under Getty, the division commander, to the left of the army. What became of the other brigade of the 3d division I do not know. I suppose it was somewhere on the Germanna Road. The right of the 6th corps at the front, I feel quite sure, was not far from Flat Run, as indicated on the map by the blue line of breastworks.

What means were taken to protect the Germanna Road against attacks by way of the roads leading into it between Flat Run and the Rapidan, I have not ascertained.

Over on the Plank Road we left Hammond, with his 500 cavalymen, resisting Hill's advance; and we have seen that our strong position at Chewning's had been given up.

Early in the morning the 2d division of the 6th corps, under Getty, had arrived at Old Wilderness Tavern. At eleven o'clock Meade sent that division to seize the Plank and Brock roads at their intersection. Just before, he had sent to Hancock to move his command up the Brock Road to the same point. Earlier in the morning he had merely sent orders to Hancock to halt his command, for the enemy had been discovered, the order said, in some force on the Orange Pike, and the earlier order had found Hancock with his advance upon the Catharpin Road, two miles beyond Todd's Tavern.

The order to Getty was not too late.¹ This is all that can be said. If Crawford gave Hammond no assistance from Chewning's, he surely could not have hidden the fact that the enemy was moving up the Plank Road, and it would seem that measures ought to have been taken to seize the cross-roads before eleven o'clock. I cannot, however, think that the enemy

¹ He was ordered at same time that Hancock was ordered up, — between nine and ten. He got to the cross-roads before twelve o'clock. It was only two miles off. — A. A. Humphreys, *Va. Camp.* 25, 28.

had been in very strong force in the early morning, for had he been, he surely had an opportunity to seize the cross-roads, for the possession of which the real fighting of the Battle of the Wilderness took place. Perhaps the knowledge that we were at Chewning's made him cautious in his advance. At any rate Getty arrived in time, having marched by the Germanna and Brock roads. It was about one o'clock. He learned that Hill's corps was in his front, and momentarily expecting an attack, began throwing up breastworks along the Brock Road. Wheaton's brigade he placed with its left on the Plank Road; a brigade commanded by General L. A. Grant, known through the war as the Vermont brigade, he placed on the left of that road, and Eustis's to the right of Wheaton.

Our cavalry had been driven back nearly to the Brock Road, and the rapidity and character of the enemy's fire showed that an infantry force was advancing. Two regiments were instantly deployed as skirmishers, and succeeded in checking the further advance of the enemy. Our army had not been cut in two.

Hancock's troops began to arrive somewhat after two o'clock, the narrow road having become blocked with artillery which could not be hauled out of the way on account of the density of the wood on either side. Hancock came in advance of his troops. At 2.15 P. M. he received a dispatch from General Humphreys,¹ Meade's chief of staff, saying that Warren's left, Crawford's division, was within a mile of Parker's Store, but that the enemy held the Plank Road nearly to its intersection with the Brock Road, and directing him to attack with his own command and Getty's, and endeavor to connect with Warren.

The dispatch said that Griffin's division had been driven back on the Pike. This helps us fix the relative times at which the encounters on the two roads took place. Fifteen minutes later, Hancock received a second dispatch, to the

¹ Sent to him at 1.30 P. M. — A. A. Humphreys, Va. Camp. 30.

same effect as to Warren's position, but saying that our cavalry had been driven in from Parker's Store, and that Getty had been ordered to drive the enemy back, but might not be able to do so. Hancock was ordered to support Getty, drive the enemy beyond Parker's Store, and unite with Warren.

Hancock, when he first appeared at the cross-roads, finding that Lee was fighting an aggressive battle, gave directions that his division commanders, as they came into position, should erect breastworks. Birney, coming first, went into position on the left of Getty, then Mott, and then Gibbon, — these three along the Brock Road. Barlow, coming last, was thrown forward on some high ground in front of the Brock Road. This elevated ground commanded the country for some distance to the right and left, sweeping the unfinished Fredericksburg and Orange Railroad in front. Owing to the dense forest in Hancock's front, this was the only position in which artillery could be used ; and here he directed all his guns, some fifty in number, should be posted, with the exception of a single battery which he posted near the extreme left, and a single section of another battery which he placed at the cross-roads.

Barlow's left was refused, the line of Frank's brigade crossing the Brock Road just below a road coming in from the Furnaces. When the breastworks had been erected, Barlow's position was remarkably strong. Before night a line of breastworks was erected the whole length of Hancock's front ; but in the mean time, as we shall see, a part of his troops had become heavily engaged some distance in front of these works.

Hancock may have inferred from orders received, directing him to attack with Getty's command, supported by his whole corps, that he was to attack when he had the whole corps in hand, but probably he exercised his discretion. I have no authority for my opinion, but it seems to me that he, too,

found that he had a large force of the enemy in his immediate front, and knew that that force could only be there for one purpose, — to fight a battle; that he felt that the battle was to be his battle, and meant to be sure of winning before he allowed himself to become engaged. At a glance he had made the best possible disposition of his troops for fighting a defensive battle, as any one may see who goes over the ground to-day.

If Hancock delayed his attack in the exercise of his discretion, he is open to censure. It might have happened that Hill was sending troops to reinforce Ewell, and that it was desired that Hancock should keep him occupied where he was. As a matter of fact, however, there was more probability, at that time, that Ewell would be sending troops to Hill. When the two orders to which I have just referred were received, Hancock had not completed his formation, and he seems to have determined to do so before attacking.

Between three and four o'clock he was again ordered to attack with Getty's troops, supported by his whole corps; but even at quarter past four he was not ready, for at 4.15 Getty moved forward alone. Meade had directed him to attack without waiting for Hancock. The ground was generally level. The Plank Road in front of the Brock Road for a mile or more towards Parker's Store may be called a level road. Looking at Michler's map we may see that the streams here run north and south from a narrow plateau which has the Plank Road along the middle. Some way to the right and left of the road are depressions which perhaps are entitled to the name of ravines.

Advancing scarcely two hundred yards along this plateau,
the skirmishers struck the enemy — or the enemy struck them
— either way, for at the moment Hill was advancing upon Getty. The firing began first on the extreme right, but in a moment was along the line of the three brigades. The enemy seemed to have no skirmishers, and ours were at once ab-

4.15 PM
5.15. 1864

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PLANK

sorbed by the main line. Fifty yards apart the confronting lines halted. Neither was protected by breastworks. They met in the open field, if it may be called open where the thicket was so dense that neither could see the other. But each was well aware of the presence of the other. The firing was such that neither could advance. There was no advantage in position, and both lines hugged the ground, not however, diminishing their fire.

But although Hancock was slow to begin, Getty once engaged, he sent Birney, commanding his own and Mott's divisions to Getty's support. A small portion of Birney's own division was sent in on Getty's right; the remainder supported him in the rear; and on his left was Mott; Owen's and Carroll's brigades were afterwards sent up from Gibbon, and advanced on the right, Birney at that time relieving Getty, who had been in the front line. A section of Ricketts's battery advanced along the Plank Road. It was captured and recaptured during the fight.

The battle raged with great severity and obstinacy until about eight o'clock without decided advantage to either party. It was especially severe in the immediate vicinity of the Plank Road, and the division of the 6th corps lost many men. It held the front line till six o'clock, and so active were the enemy's troops that when it was relieved, they pressed forward and took several prisoners, one a staff officer, who brought the word for the troops in front to fall back; for the front line was relieved by falling back through a new line, and not by the fresh troops passing over them.

The enemy in this affair appeared in the greatest force on the south side of the Plank Road, the left, I suppose, being thrown back to guard against an attack from the 5th corps. Yet the heavy fighting did not extend as far down as Gibbon's right, for Webb, who held that position and was at work upon his breastworks, says that the enemy did not advance, but kept up a very annoying fire.

Till near night our troops as a general thing did all that could be expected of them, maintaining their advanced ground when they found they could do no more, although they knew of their substantial breastworks just in the rear. Then for some unaccountable reason Mott's division gave way. Colonel McAllister, who afterwards commanded the 1st brigade of that division, says "that to his great astonishment the line began to give way on the left. It is said, first the Excelsior brigade, then my left regiment, the 1st Massachusetts, and regiment after regiment, like a rolling wave, fell back, and all efforts to rally them were in vain." "To assign a cause for it," he goes on to say, "would be impossible, unless it was from the fact that a large number of the troops were about to leave the service. I think this had much to do with it."

But here let me observe that in *all* this wood fighting our troops seem to have been greatly alarmed whenever the noise of a contest to the right or the left told them that there was fighting in the rear of a prolongation of their own line. Such noises seem to have caused more disturbance than a foe directly in front. And I think it was the same with the enemy's troops. However, the enemy at this time was not aware of our confusion.

In this fight General Alexander Hayes was killed.

When Getty arrived at the intersection of the two roads and threw out his skirmish line, he thought he had both Wilcox and Heth in his front. He had Heth alone. A Confederate account states that just before this time, Lee, who was with Hill, had directed Wilcox to open communication with Ewell. It is said that Wilcox proceeded through the woods to Chewning's, arriving there, I should infer, just after Crawford left. Indeed he took a few prisoners. Leaving two brigades at Chewning's, he pressed on toward the Pike, but before his command could reach Ewell, he was ordered back, and on his way back he captured 300 prisoners. This account I think is correct. Before I read it I had come to the conclusion that

the regiment lost by McCandless must have been captured by troops advancing from the Plank Road.

When Getty's fight began, Grant and Meade were at the Lacy house. Something like order had been restored in the 5th corps. The heavy firing told that a severe battle was raging on the left, and Grant ordered a movement in favor of the troops there engaged. Wadsworth, who was there also, was much chagrined at the conduct of his men a few hours before, and at his request his troops were designated to reinforce the left. Baxter's brigade of Robinson's division was added to his command. Between four and five o'clock he entered the woods southeast of the Lacy house. Soon after he formed in line of battle, his own division in front and Baxter's brigade in rear, and moved towards the left. After proceeding half a mile, the skirmish line of the enemy was struck. It made but feeble resistance, yet the progress of the troops was slow, mostly owing to the nature of the country, and night came on before they could form a connection with Hancock. The men slept in line of battle facing the Plank Road, between Widow Tapp's field and the Brock Road, the left about half a mile from the Brock Road.

Night put an end to Hancock's engagement. The disaster to Mott was not known to the enemy, who for an hour had been praying for night and for Longstreet.

The orders of the Lieutenant-General for the morning were, "Attack along the whole line at five o'clock." So records Swinton. He also states in substance that Lee had determined to deliver an overwhelming blow upon the left of the Union army, and that, in order to divert attention until Longstreet should be up, he resolved to make a demonstration against the Union right, and that so it came about that fifteen minutes before the time appointed by Grant for the general attack, Ewell fell upon Sedgwick.

I do not think that the Confederates were the first to resume the fighting on the 6th of May. And excepting that it was

the fashion of the battle, I should doubt whether Warren was ordered to attack at all. The enemy had a strong position in his front, and his own force had been much weakened. Wadsworth's division, we have seen, had gone to Hancock's support; and Robinson's division, excepting the brigade with Wadsworth, had been withdrawn to the Old Wilderness Tavern, to be sent where most needed. I feel certain that none of the regular regiments made any attack that day, and several of the commanders of other regiments in Griffin's division report that they occupied the breastworks all day.

No report of any command in the 6th corps mentions an attack by the enemy on the morning of the 6th of May, but in several of them it is stated that the 6th corps advanced upon the enemy at five o'clock. Officers unite that they made repeated attempts to carry the enemy's line; and Early says:¹ "Early on the morning of the 6th the fighting was resumed, and a very heavy attack was made on the front occupied by Pegram's brigade, but it was handsomely repulsed, as were several subsequent attacks at the same point."

There is no doubt that Sedgwick, Hancock, and Wadsworth were ordered to attack at five o'clock. Three divisions of Burnside's army came up about this time. Of these Stevenson's was sent to Hancock, while the other two under Burnside himself were directed to endeavor to seize the strong position at Chewning's. The colored troops had been stationed upon the roads running westerly from the Germanna Road and lying between Sedgwick's right and the river.

There are but one or two square miles upon this continent that have been more saturated with blood than was the square mile which lay in front of the Brock Road and had the Orange Plank Road as a central avenue, in the two days of the Battle of the Wilderness. And this bloody field differs much from those which have been its rivals as scenes of

¹ The Last Year of the War, by Lieutenant-General J. A. Early, C. S. A., p. 17.

slaughter. Within a very limited compass in other battles thousands have fallen by the fire generally of artillery, not less than of infantry, as they pressed forward to take some fortified line; and the line once reached, the carnage has been awful. But here, although both parties had breastworks, the fighting was far from being confined to those breastworks. Nearly every square yard had its fill of blood, and on nearly every square yard was Northern and Southern blood intermingled.

And although the battle was fought with the hot sun of the month of May in Virginia glaring overhead, it was, as it were, fought in the night. Excepting in the roads the dense wood rendered it impossible for any soldier to see what was going on three rods from where he stood. I premise what I have to say of the fighting of the 6th of May with this general statement, because, with such labor as I have been able to give to the subject, I have not been able to satisfactorily unravel the story of that day. And yet, although I know that much more can be done than I have done, I doubt whether the story will ever be satisfactorily told, more especially the story of those who fought under the Union flag. That of the men who fought against that flag has been pretty well written by Leigh Robinson, Esq., of Washington, who had served as a gallant private in the Richmond Howitzers, and had been chosen as the orator of the evening at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Virginia Division of the Army of Northern Virginia Association. I have had his book before me while writing. He has, however, fallen into many errors, some of which I will endeavor to point out. His laudatory passages will frequently cause the Northern reader to smile, and yet his book is a valuable contribution to the history of the Wilderness Battle.

I say I fear the account of the doings of our own army will never be written to our satisfaction, because I don't see how it is ever to be determined just where particular troops

were engaged, — many of them, — or just when they were engaged, or just whom they engaged. The official reports, such as have been written, were all written three months after the event, when many subsequent struggles must have dimmed the recollections of those who wrote. Many who had known most were dead, and it is always difficult to describe clearly deeds which were not understood at the time by the party performing them. I have read about all the official reports which have been written concerning this fight. They make a confused tale, and much of it a confused tale about confusion. Reports are contradictory as to acts and as to times. I can therefore only describe in a general way what took place.

Promptly at five o'clock Birney, with his own and Mott's divisions, passed over the breastworks and moved upon the enemy in several lines of battle. They were supported by Carroll's and Owen's brigades, sent up from Gibbon, and also by the two brigades of Getty's division of the 6th corps. Up to this time the cavalry had reported nothing concerning Longstreet. At daylight Hancock was informed from headquarters that Longstreet was passing up the Catharpin Road to attack his left flank, and he accordingly left Barlow in his strong position to receive him, taking also measures to strengthen considerably the extreme left where the line crossed the Brock Road, a heavy skirmish line being thrown out some way down that road. Gibbon was given the command of the left, Webb's brigade remaining in the breastworks, to be sent where most needed.

Wadsworth also made a demonstration against the enemy at five o'clock. He was then facing the Plank Road, his left about half a mile from the Brock Road. He soon found that a battery was enfilading his line from the right, and holding back, he directed a strong force to steal to the right, screened by the woods, and endeavor to capture it. The movement failed. Just before the detachment emerged from the woods

it was discovered. The battery limbered up and was hastily driven back into the open field about four hundred yards, when it again opened, this time upon the force sent to capture it, which retired with some loss. The battery of which I have spoken was upon the left of Hill's corps.

The enemy's line was considerably in advance of the front line of rebel breastworks shown on the map. These works were probably thrown up later in the day or possibly on the 7th. Robinson states that the rebels were too weary that night (the night of the 5th) to erect breastworks, and that they expected to be relieved by Longstreet before dawn. Heth was on the left of the road, the enemy's left, and Wilcox mostly on the south. He had one brigade at Heth's left. In rear, at the further end of Widow Tapp's field, were posted two batteries in strong works. This was the reserve. I will add that in the space between the two opposing lines of breastworks there is an occasional rifle-pit which appears to have been used by both sides.¹

Birney with his strong command moved solidly but slowly forward, the woods obstructing his progress more than the enemy.

Hancock in his report says: ²

"After a desperate contest in which our troops behaved in a most intrepid manner, the enemy's line was broken at all points, and he was driven in confusion through the forest for about one and a half miles, suffering severe losses in killed, wounded, and prisoners."

He makes a mistake as to the distance, and it was some time before the fighting became severe. Although Private Robinson represents that Heth on the Confederate left made no fight at all, and that Wilcox alone resisted the Union troops, I feel sure that none of Hancock's command on the

¹ Hancock says positively in a dispatch that there was first a line of log breastworks, then a line of earth intrenchments. — 68 W. R. 443.

² 67 W. R. 321.

right of the road reached the Widow Tapp's field.¹ But on the left our troops reached a considerably more advanced position relatively to the road, forcing Wilcox's right well back. Indeed a large portion of Wilcox's division was driven in disorder entirely across the Plank Road, where Generals Lee and Hill in person helped to rally them. In rebel accounts our bullets are said to have crossed the road in rear of their batteries on the left road. A glance at the map may perhaps show this to have been possible, for the Plank Road here runs diagonally across what was then our line of battle.

It was now that the fighting became severe. Hancock goes on to say: "Our line, which had been somewhat disordered by the long distance which it had pressed after the enemy through the woods, was now halted to adjust its formation before proceeding further."

But it was the enemy, and not the woods wholly, that caused that halt. It was nearly seven o'clock, and Longstreet had arrived. This was entirely unexpected to Hancock. He still believed Longstreet to be on the Catharpin Road, and so far away that he had just before directed Gibbon to send Barlow forward. Webb, with his brigade, was already marching up the Plank Road. Gibbon sent only one brigade of Barlow's, Frank's, probably because of the apprehended attack of Longstreet. Hancock says, "Frank was sent to feel the enemy's right, and after an obstinate contest succeeded in forcing a connection with the left of Mott's division." But if it was at this time that Frank joined Mott, I cannot believe that he encountered any troops whatever in his progress through the woods.

About the time Hancock sent for Barlow's division, a body of convalescents, that had been sent to Chancellorsville and afterwards had been trying to overtake the 2d corps, to which they belonged, were seen coming up the Brock Road from

¹ Since the discussion upon my paper, I have no longer this confidence. — W. W. Swan.

Todd's Tavern, and were mistaken for the advance of Longstreet's column.

As late as ten o'clock cavalry firing was heard in the distance, and surely this was Longstreet — of so much assistance was the cavalry to the infantry this day. But as I have said, at seven o'clock Longstreet was already engaged on the Plank Road. Our troops had now fairly routed Hill's.

Suddenly at some distance to the south of the Plank Road they came upon a brigade belonging to Longstreet, a little way in advance of the main line which he was forming. This brigade was quickly driven back upon the main line, which consisted of three brigades. On the north of the road our troops came as suddenly upon a brigade of Texans belonging to Longstreet's corps, at the head of which Lee had placed himself, in Widow Tapp's field, with the intention of leading it against the enemy. Private Robinson's account of this incident is thrilling. Lee, however, did not lead the brigade into action, and when it met our troops it was nearly annihilated. A brigade of Georgians, forming the second line, met the same fate. A third line could not be overpowered.

Then for two hours there was no fighting. We were re-adjusting our lines, and the enemy was getting together Hill's scattered troops and sending them to fill the gap as far as possible between Longstreet and Ewell.

The left wing of our advanced line was now parallel to the Brock Road. Wadsworth had swung around and was now facing up the Plank Road. Stevenson's division of the 9th corps had come up. Just before nine o'clock all these troops moved forward, and then followed as severe fighting as at any time took place that day. Sometimes one party gained a little ground, and then the other. And all this was in the dense wood. General Hancock says:¹ "The undergrowth was so heavy that it was scarcely possible to see more than 100 paces in any direction. No movements of the enemy

¹ 67 W. R. 325.

could be observed until the lines were almost in collision. Only the roar of the musketry disclosed the position of the combatants to those who were at any distance, and my knowledge of what was transpiring in the field, except in my immediate presence, was limited, and was necessarily derived from subordinate commanders."

In relieving troops, the woods were the cause of disaster. In the early fight the troops of the 6th corps, although some way to the rear in the beginning, had come to be in the front line on the right of the road. When Wadsworth's and Stevenson's divisions came up, Getty's troops were crowded to the other side of the road. This was not known to Birney, and he directed Webb to relieve them with his brigade. Webb therefore formed in line of battle on the right of the road and went forward, intending to pass over the troops of the 6th corps when they were reached. Of course he found no 6th corps, and it was not long before he struck the enemy, and at great disadvantage to himself, for he was advancing without skirmishers, thinking he had Union troops in his front. He was soon driven back. Webb was now in the extreme advance upon both sides of the road, his right in the woods that lie between the road and the big circular field, as shown upon the map, of Widow Tapp's farm. Some troops of the 8th corps were close in rear, and General Wadsworth assumed command of the whole.

One of Webb's regiments on the left of the road was the 20th Massachusetts, and while Webb was upon the right of his line looking after that flank, which was exposed, that regiment was ordered forward by Wadsworth, and in the attack which it made as an isolated regiment suffered severely. Colonel Macy, commanding the regiments, was wounded in the leg, and Major Abbott mortally wounded.

No account of the Battle of the Wilderness written for this Society, which is made up so largely of the friends of Abbott, would be complete should it not contain the tributes paid to

his memory by his corps and brigade commanders in their official reports of the battle.

General Hancock says:¹ "Major Henry L. Abbott, 20th Massachusetts Volunteers, was mortally wounded while leading his regiment in the heat of the action in the morning of the 6th. This brilliant young officer by his courageous conduct in action, the high state of discipline in his regiment, his devotion to duty at all times, had obtained the highest reputation among his commanding officers. His loss was greatly deplored."

General Webb says:² "Major Henry L. Abbott, 20th Massachusetts Volunteers, died from his wounds, received in the advance of his regiment. He lived but a short time after being wounded. It will be found very difficult to replace him. No truer soldier was in my command. His reputation as an officer stood far beyond the usual eulogies pronounced upon dead officers. I feel that his merit was so peculiar, and his worth so well known to all the officers of the corps, and to the general commanding, that it is not necessary for me to attempt to do him justice. My brigade lost in him its best soldier."

You will also gladly place upon your records Webb's tribute to the regiment. He says: "I had occasion to call attention of officers and men to the manner in which the 20th Massachusetts fought this day, and to point out particularly how much its fighting was due to the gallantry and discipline of its officers."

Wadsworth made another effort to advance, but the men had lost their dash, some of them being greatly disturbed by the change of front, for Webb had been forced to face a part of his command to the north. Then, too, in this part of the field no regiment in the line had a regiment of its own corps on either flank. Owing to the woods, some of the best regiments attacked singly. Many lives were lost and nothing was accomplished.

¹ 67 W. R. 326.

² Ibid. 438.

There was also fighting from time to time at the left. Kershaw, the rebel general, speaks of the enemy as at intervals bearing down upon his lines, but always without any success.

I have represented Hancock's troops as clashing with Longstreet's before the early halt in the morning. It is not without hesitation that I have come to believe this to be true. Hancock, as I have said, seems to think that his troops had become so disordered by pressing after the enemy a long distance through the woods that a halt was necessary to readjust the lines, and that he had still nothing in his immediate front but Hill. And Wilcox to some extent sustains Hancock.

Wilcox is reviewing Taylor's "Four Years with General Lee," and is commenting upon this passage in that work:¹ "General Longstreet, taking in the situation at a glance, was prompt to act, immediately caused his division to be deployed in line of battle, and gallantly advanced to recover the lost ground." To this Wilcox says: "This might make the impression that General Longstreet became engaged almost instantly upon reaching the field. As the head (Kershaw's division) of Longstreet's column arrived, I met it and ordered it to file to the right as rapidly as possible into the woods, so as to form line of battle speedily, lest my division, then being forced back, might be driven on to it before it should form. Less than a brigade of Kershaw had filed into the woods when Longstreet appeared on the field. I pointed out to him where General Lee could be found; he was within 200 yards of us. My division was not forced back upon Kershaw; the enemy halted some 300 yards short."

But here is an admission by Wilcox, who is defending the reputation of his own troops, that Longstreet's troops were on the ground in line of battle at the time of the early halt, and that this was some time before the nine o'clock advance.

Longstreet himself says:² "Arriving at Parker's Store

¹ S. H. S. vol. vi, p. 72.

² 67 W. R. 1054.

about dawn, I was directed to move my column down the Plank Road to relieve the divisions of Heth and Wilcox, which were in position in face of the enemy on the right and left of the Plank Road, at right angles with it and about three miles below Parker's Store. Kershaw's division was in the lead. Arriving in the rear of the line held by these two divisions, and when the head of my column had filed to the right and had only time to deploy two regiments of Kershaw's old brigade, an advance was made by the whole line of the enemy, and the divisions of Heth and Wilcox broke and retreated in some confusion. With considerable difficulty, but with steadiness, opening their ranks to let the retreating divisions through, Kershaw formed his line on the right, and Field on the left of the Plank Road."

Dawn comes at a very early hour on the 6th of May, and Parker's Store is less than three miles from the Widow Tapp's farm. And then every man in the South fully believes the story of Lee's attempted charge with the Texas brigade, belonging to Longstreet's corps. And Colonel Venable, who was present, represents this incident as taking place immediately upon the arrival of Longstreet's divisions; and these, he says, came the last mile and a half at a double-quick in parallel columns along the Plank Road.

At eleven o'clock Anderson's division of Hill's corps being now up, and its brigades having been sent to different places in the lines where most needed, Longstreet determined to assume the offensive. Kershaw gives the best account of the celebrated flank movement which was then executed. He says:¹ "The lines being rectified, and Field's division and Wofford's brigade of my own having arrived, upon the suggestion of Brigadier-General Wofford, a movement was organized, under the orders of the Lieutenant-General commanding, to attack the enemy in flank from the line of the Orange Railroad on our right with the brigades of General

¹ 67 W. R. 1061.

Anderson of Field's division and Brigadier-General Wofford's of my own, supported by Mahone's brigade, while we continued to hold the enemy in front, who was at intervals bearing down upon our lines, but always without any success. This movement, concealed from view by the dense wood, was eminently successful, and the enemy was routed and driven pellmell as far as the Brock Road, and pursued by General Wofford to some distance across the Plank Road, where he halted within a few hundred yards of the Germanna Road."

There is but little which is satisfactory in our own accounts of this disaster. Frank's brigade, which formed the extreme left of our advanced troops, was instantly overrun; Mott's division gave way, and the men swarmed to the Plank Road, along the rear of the troops fighting in the immediate vicinity of that road. An attempt was made to swing back the left of these troops, but it was useless. They, too, soon went back in disorder. All organization and control seemed to have been lost. Except in a few instances, even regiments could not be kept as entireties. The veterans of the 2d and 6th corps, however, remembered where the Brock Road breastworks were and made their way thither, some by command, but many without. Many were re-formed without much delay in their old positions in these works, notably the 1st and 3d brigades of Getty's division of the 6th corps, occupying their former quarters in the front line of the works at the intersection of the roads, which they themselves had begun to throw up upon their opportune arrival about twenty-four hours before, and which had already done them and others good service. They were now under the command of Wheaton, for the fearless and faithful Getty had been wounded.

Most of the men of the 5th corps, Wadsworth's division, who had come through the woods from the Lacy house, sought that place of refuge once more, but in a worse plight, if anything, than they were in when they came back from Warren's attack of the day before. Of 5000 men only 480 could

be got together later in the afternoon in the vicinity of the scene of their last defeat. But it should be added that the 5000 had not all run away. The 4th division of the 5th corps in the two days in the Wilderness lost 16 officers and 175 men killed, and 40 officers and 989 men wounded. And most of these casualties occurred while the division was on the Plank Road. Moreover the 5000 includes Baxter's brigade of the 2d division of the 5th corps. Among the wounded was the noble citizen soldier, Wadsworth. He died the next day in rebel hands. He had once been governor of the Empire State, and had he lived, I think he would now be the commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States.

Webb's single brigade, which we have seen was fighting under Wadsworth, lost in the two days 23 officers and 937 enlisted men, killed and wounded.

The rebel General Mahone says in his report:¹ "His [the enemy's] long lines of dead and wounded which lay in the wake of our 'swoop' furnished evidence that he was not allowed time to 'change front,' as well as of the execution of our fire."

Although the rebels knew they had caused us to retreat in disorder, the woods did not allow them to see the extent of the disorder. It is reported that in the road a Maine regiment did excellent service, preventing the enemy from seeing the rout there. We lost very few captured by the enemy. I do not know that any were thus lost at this time.

Just at the close of this affair, General Longstreet was wounded. How that general intended to follow up his success is told by Kershaw in his report.² "Returning," he says, "with General Wofford up the Plank Road and learning the condition of things in front, we met the Lieutenant-General commanding coming to the front, almost within musket range of the Brock Road. Exchanging hasty congratulations upon the success of the morning, the Lieutenant-General rapidly

¹ 57 W. R. 1091.

² Ibid. 1062.

planned and directed an attack to be made by Brigadier-General Jenkins and myself upon the position of the enemy upon the Brock Road before he could recover from his disaster. The order to me was to break their line and push all to the right of the road toward Fredericksburg. Jenkins's brigade was put in motion by the flank in the Plank Road, my division in the woods to the right. I rode with General Jenkins at the head of his command, arranging with him the details of our combined attack. We had not advanced as far as the position still held by Wofford's brigade, when two or three shots were fired on the left of the road, and some stragglers came running in from that direction, and immediately a volley was poured into the head of our column from the woods on our right, occupied by Mahone's brigade." Longstreet was wounded by this volley.

Perhaps this time the woods were our safety, but I cannot believe that Longstreet would have had any better success in the attempt to carry our intrenched lines than Lee had a few hours later. General Hancock says, "Order was soon restored;" and I feel that, if there had been danger of his losing the cross-roads, he would have ordered to that point Leasure's brigade of the 9th corps and Eustis's brigade of the 6th corps, which he had in reserve near the left of his line, and have even thrown back his entire left to the Plank Road, facing it to the south to cover the entrance to the Germanna Road, although such a movement might have endangered our trains at Chancellorsville.

At army headquarters it was thought that Hancock's left had been turned, and this note was sent to General Sheridan:¹

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

May 6, 1864. One o'clock P. M.

Major-General Sheridan, Comd'g Cavalry Division.

Your despatch of 11.45 A. M. received. Gen. Hancock has been heavily pressed and his left turned. The Maj.

¹ 68 W. R. 467.

Gen'l Comd'g. thinks you had better draw in your cavalry so as to secure the protection of the trains. The order requiring an escort for the wagons to-night has been rescinded.

A. A. HUMPHREYS,
Chief of Staff.

And here let me refer once more to the cavalry. I have said that they rendered us very little — too little — assistance in the Battle of the Wilderness. I must not forget the good work done by Hammond and his 500 cavalry on the Plank Road. After daylight of the 5th, they did just what in my opinion is to be expected of cavalry. They reported that they had found a strong infantry force approaching, and then they obstinately resisted its progress until our infantry came up. Our army would have been cut in two but for that resistance. General Meade had delayed dispatching Getty to the cross-roads until the last moment.

General Sheridan thinks otherwise of the office of cavalry. In his report he says:¹ "After carefully studying the topography of the country from the Rapidan to Richmond, which is of a thickly wooded character, its numerous and almost parallel streams nearly all uniting forming the York River, I took up the idea that our cavalry ought to fight the enemy's cavalry, and our infantry the enemy's infantry. I was strengthened in this impression still more by the consciousness of a want of appreciation on the part of infantry commanders as to the power of a large and well-managed body of horse; but as it was difficult to overcome the established custom of wasting cavalry for the protection of trains and for the establishment of cordons around a sleeping infantry force, we had to bide our time."

Now, if cavalry were to fight cavalry only, nothing would be accomplished. If all the troops in the war on both sides

¹ 67 W. R. 787.

had been mounted, we should be scampering over the country now. What is wanted of cavalry is, first of all, that it shall report where the enemy is and of what arm his force consists, and then that it shall obstruct as far as possible any advance by the enemy until the infantry is ready to meet him. If the infantry is already in position, it is enough for the cavalry to report the approach of the enemy, describing him as minutely as possible.

Having these views, it seems to me that it is inexcusable that Hancock should not have been informed on the 6th that the firing on his left was merely that of cavalry; and I am equally strong in my belief that cavalry ought to have reported the advance of Ewell in time to have prevented the surprise of General Grant on the Pike.

Wilson did have a hard fight with the enemy's cavalry off at the left, got into considerable trouble, and was rescued by Gregg, but this fighting was almost too remote from the scenes which I am describing to be considered a part of the Battle of the Wilderness.

I have omitted to say by what road Longstreet came to Parker's Store. I write this at the last moment without time to look the matter up, but I have always supposed that he came by the wood road which runs from Parker's Store to the Catharpin Road, entering the latter two miles east of Shady Grove Church. At any rate he went into camp on the afternoon of the 5th somewhere on the Catharpin Road six or seven miles from Parker's Store. At midnight he moved again, arriving at Parker's Store, as we have seen, at dawn. Longstreet says Rosser's cavalry was skirmishing in his front all day on the 5th. He outnumbered or overpowered Wilson. This was a good use of cavalry. Wilson could not tell whether there was infantry behind or not, and neither he nor Gregg knew when Longstreet left the Catharpin Road. Hancock, on the morning of the 6th, was told before five o'clock that Longstreet was approaching by the Catharpin and Brock roads.

The reverse of Hancock was reported at headquarters. Again the order was, attack along the whole line at six o'clock; and Robinson's division of the 5th corps was sent to Hancock.

Hancock says:¹ "I am not aware what movements were made by General Burnside near Parker's Store on the morning of the 6th, but I experienced no relief from the attack I was informed he would make across my front, — a movement long and anxiously waited for."

This is what he did, as related by Potter, Willcox, and Hartranft. He was directed to seize the high ground at Chewning's, and early in the morning he moved from the Lacy house with Potter's and Willcox's divisions by the road taken by Crawford the previous morning, Potter in advance. Hartranft, one of the brigade commanders, says they could hear Hancock's battle on the Plank Road. Half a mile out they threw out skirmishers and flankers; half a mile further they met a skirmish line of the enemy. But Burnside's skirmish line found no difficulty in advancing to the edge of Chewning's field, when they received a musketry fire and fell back. Potter's division was shelled when it was in the open field on the other side of the run from Chewning's, but no attempt was made to occupy Chewning's field. This, I think, might easily have been done. The enemy could have had nothing more than a skirmish line there in support of the battery until long after, when, as we have seen, some of the rebel General Wilcox's scattered men were got together and sent thither, and very likely Anderson's division. The lines of works shown on the map in red could not have existed at this time. After considerable time idly spent, Burnside decided to do his fighting near the Widow Tapp's field. Leaving Christ's brigade on the Parker Store Road, he set about this new movement with Potter's division, supported by Hartranft's brigade.

¹ 67 W. R. 326.

Hartranft thus tells a part of the story :¹

"Soon after, Potter's division was ordered to the left, and I was ordered to his support. This movement was to the rear, and on account of the underbrush was not very promptly made. After moving back nearly a mile, the lines were again formed. I formed in support of Bliss's brigade of Potter's division, facing south, perhaps a little east of south."

Finally, he says, the enemy was struck in works. An attack was made which at first was successful. Hartranft says : "We carried the works and held them for a moment, until a panic seized the left, which brought back the whole line in confusion. . . . After this repulse, Christ's brigade came up and took position on my left. At 4.30 P. M., in obedience to orders from the general commanding the division, I again advanced, but found the enemy's fire very severe. My line halted. I did not order it forward, but reported to the general commanding the division. I was soon after notified that no further advance would be made. In this last advance my loss in killed and wounded was larger than in the morning."

Burnside, however, did rather better than Hartranft represents. Several spirited charges were made, and must have had the effect of keeping quite a large body of men from Lee's support in the final attack he was just then making upon Hancock.

One of these brigades of Burnside's lost 469 officers and men killed and wounded, the other 463. Burnside's three divisions of white troops seem to have lost pretty evenly, for Stevenson lost 451 killed and wounded. Burnside's attack was too late to be of substantial benefit. Hill was now in position upon the left of Longstreet's corps and stretching well over towards Ewell. Burnside undoubtedly encountered the fresh troops of Anderson.

Lee had not waited until six o'clock for Hancock to renew the battle. When Longstreet was wounded, he had assumed

¹ 67 W. R. 948.

immediate command of his corps. At quarter past four he had re-formed with his right resting on the railroad, and now he was advancing upon Hancock's intrenched position. His advance was directed against the part of the lines held by Mott's division, his left, however, overlapping Birney, and being some little distance south of the Plank Road.

His troops pressed forward until within less than a hundred paces from the front line of our works, where they halted and kept up an uninterrupted fire, but with little execution. Then, for some unaccountable reason, a portion of Mott's division and Ward's brigade of Birney's gave way, and the enemy pushed forward, some of them so far as to plant their flags upon the breastworks. Carroll's brigade, however, which was then under Birney and in reserve, had been so drawn up relatively to the point of attack that it was the work of but a moment to sweep down obliquely upon the enemy and drive him out.

Gibbon, too, judging from the firing that the enemy had broken our line, sent Brooke's brigade through the woods towards the point of attack, but it arrived only in time to find that Carroll had repulsed the enemy.

During this attack by Lee our breastworks caught fire in several places, much to the discomfiture of our men; and to this fire is generally attributed the temporary loss of the works. I, however, think that too much importance has been given to this fire. This ended the fighting on the left.

There remains to be described but one more affair of importance. The Confederates had known all this day, the 6th, that the right flank of the 6th corps was unprotected, but no attack had been made upon it because of the movements of Ferrero's division, which we have seen was somewhere between Sedgwick and the river, and because it was supposed that Burnside's corps was in rear of the 6th corps's right. But in the afternoon it was discovered that Burnside had gone to our left, and it was determined to make the attack.

It was made at seven o'clock by Gordon's and Pegram's brigades, supported by Johnston's. It fell upon Shaler's brigade of Wright's division and Seymour's brigade of Ricketts's division of the 6th corps; Shaler being on the extreme right of the army, and being separated from the other brigades of Wright's division. As I have said, Shaler had been in the rear the previous day, and now he was posted out of his usual place.

It was an extraordinary affair. Shaler was facing at right angles to the rest of the corps. Gordon marched to the left and formed some distance back in the woods on Shaler's flank, as he thought, but in reality across Shaler's front. So, when he advanced, he unexpectedly struck the breastworks and was thrown into great confusion. Unluckily for the 6th corps, Johnson, who was following Gordon, by a mistake obliqued too much, and, losing Gordon, found himself in rear of the 6th corps's main line. This threw Shaler into disorder, and also Seymour, although Seymour repulsed an attack made in his front by Pegram. Both Union troops and rebels were beaten. The new lines taken up by the 6th corps show the defeat on our part.

Early says:¹ "Notwithstanding the confusion in part of his brigade, Gordon succeeded in throwing the enemy's right flank into great confusion, capturing two brigadier-generals (Seymour and Shaler), and several hundred prisoners, all of the 6th corps under Sedgwick. The advance of Pegram's brigade and the demonstration of Johnson's brigade in the rear, where it encountered a part of the enemy's force and captured some prisoners, contributed materially to the result. It was fortunate, however, that darkness came to close this affair, as the enemy, if he had been able to discover the disorder on our side, might have brought up fresh troops and availed himself of our condition. As it was, doubtless the

¹ The Last Year of the War, by Lieutenant-General Jubal A. Early, C. S. A., p. 19.

lateness of the hour caused him to be surprised, and the approaching darkness increased the confusion in his ranks, as he could not see the strength of the attacking force, and probably imagined it to be much more formidable than it really was. All of the brigades engaged in the attack were drawn back and formed on a new line in front of the old one and obliquely to it."

"At light on the morning of the 7th an advance was made, which disclosed the fact that the enemy had given up his line of works in front of my whole line, and a good portion of Johnson's. Between the lines a large number of his dead had been left, and at his breastworks a large number of muskets and knapsacks had been abandoned, and there was every indication of great confusion. It was not till then that we ascertained the full extent of the success attending the movement of the evening before. The enemy had entirely abandoned the left side of the road, across which Johnson's line extended, and my division and a part of his were thrown forward, occupying a part of the abandoned works on the right of the road, and leaving all those on the left in our rear. This rendered our line straight, the left having been previously thrown back, making a curve."

"During this day there was some skirmishing, but no serious fighting, in my front."

And here I close. The Battle of the Wilderness had come to an end. During the 7th day of May there was no serious fighting in *any one's* front. A reconnoitring party sent out by Hancock found the enemy behind strong works. The next serious encounter was some miles to the south, and has its own name. The Battle of the Wilderness may be called a drawn battle, perhaps a success. For with drawn battles Grant would win in the end. We lost many more men than the Confederates, but that was in the programme. And never again did the Confederates attempt to assume the offensive.

VI

ADDENDA TO THE PAPER BY BREVET LIEU-
TENANT-COLONEL W. W. SWAN, U. S. A.,
ON THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

BY

COLONEL THEODORE LYMAN

A. D. C. TO MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE G. MEADE, U. S. A.

Read before the Society March 8, 1880

ADDENDA TO THE PAPER BY BREVET LIEUTENANT-COLONEL W. W. SWAN, U. S. A., ON THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

I OFFER the following fragments taken from my contemporaneous notes, in the hope they may serve to complete the elaborate paper of Colonel Swan.

12.10 P. M., May 5, 1864. Was ordered to go to General Getty, explain the position of the army, and direct him to seek roads to the right for junction with Crawford's left. At beginning of cross-road (continuation of the Brock) found Eustis's brigade going into the woods. Told him the orders. He said he would send troops to feel towards the right. Getty was sitting on the ground on the cross-road near the Plank. Two or three dead men lay near, and a wounded soldier occasionally limped past. He said all Hill's corps was coming down the Plank, and the skirmishers were within 300 yards.

12.50. Reported back at headquarters near Wilderness Tavern. Just then heavy musketry from Griffin in our front. This fixes the moment of his attack.¹ The fire continued, rising and falling, for about one and a half hours.

2.45. Griffin, with his mustering officer Captain George Barnard, rode in to General Meade. He called out loudly that he drove Ewell three quarters of a mile, but got no support on his flanks, and had to retreat. He implied censure on General Wright, and apparently on his corps commander, General Warren. General Rawlins was very angry, considering his language mutinous. Grant was of the same mind, and asked Meade: "Who is this General *Gregg*? You ought to arrest him!" Grant's coat was unbuttoned, and Meade began

¹ *Ante*, p. 130.

to button it up, as if he were a little boy, saying in a good-natured voice, "It's Griffin, not Gregg, and it's only his way of talking."

3.15. Sent with a written order to Getty to attack at once, with or without Hancock!¹ Delivered it at 3.25. Getty in the same place — very cool — plainly he thought it poor strategy to attack before more of the 2d corps was up, but he ordered an immediate advance.

4.45. Reported under orders to General Hancock. He sat on a handsome horse at the junction of the Plank Road. Violent musketry just in front, but the close saplings kept back most of the bullets. He said it was very hard to get up troops in this wood, but he was doing all he could. Presently Major Mundeel rides up: "Sir, General Getty is hard pressed and his ammunition nearly out." "Tell him to hold on, and General Gibbon will be up to help him." Soon another officer from the left: "Sir, General Mott's division has broken and is coming back."² "Tell him to stop them!" roared Hancock. Then, "Major Mitchell, go to General Gibbon and tell him to come up on the double-quick." In a short time, as I stood in the cross-road, Sprigg Carroll's brigade came along at the double-quick, the men all out of breath, and faced to the left. I remember the cool address of the colonel next me: "Now, I don't want any hollering; that's childish. Prime! Forward!" Carroll, as full of the *gaudium certaminis* as usual, rode into the sprout-growth with his line, and soon came back shot through the arm. As the sun was declining, General "Aleck" Hayes was carried past me shot through the head.³

The attack for the morrow (6th) was put off till 5.30, to give Burnside time to be in position to go in on Hill's left flank.

May 6. In the gray of the morning General Meade was on

¹ *Ante*, p. 140.

² *Ante*, p. 142.

³ *Ante*, p. 142.

horseback by the Germanna Plank Road. Captain Hutton rode to him and said that only one division of Burnside was up, and the road was blocked by the artillery, which he would order out of the way, if General Meade would permit. "No, sir," replied Meade, "I have no command over General Burnside." Here was a mishap, at once, from a divided leadership.

5.15 A. M. As I passed down the cross-road to report to General Hancock, the volleys began.¹ Hancock was on the Plank Road — radiant. "Tell General Meade," he cried, "we are driving them beautifully." The firing then lulled, but broke out again after a time. I think Colonel Swan is possibly mistaken in thinking the right of this attack never got into the open field of the Widow Tapp house.² In April, 1866, Colonel C. L. Peirson and I visited this region; and I have written in my diary that our troops advanced at least 300 yards beyond (west of) the Tapp field. This fact was suggested by the scattered graves of Texan and Alabama troops, buried where they fell, and was expressly told us by Mrs. Tapp and her three daughters, who during the fight were at a hospital just in the rear.

The battle revived with Longstreet's arrival, and at 11.10 A. M. occurred the fatal break, on Barlow's right,³ as some said, but more probably on Mott's left, as maintained by others. Barlow's brigade there was commanded by Frank, a former officer of Saxon flying artillery, a pleasant, talkative man, but one who tried to make up for want of nerve by strong drink. Barlow was obliged to relieve him.

1.15 P. M. After reporting to General Meade, returned to Hancock, who was sitting under a tree just behind the low breastwork. Officers very busy getting the men in order and under their proper colors.

2 P. M. Burnside, who should have been up and charged

¹ *Ante*, p. 146.

² *Ante*, p. 147.

³ *Ante*, p. 154.

with the rest at 5.30 A. M., made his first short attack, with loud musketry.¹ Hancock regretted he could not go forward also, but it would risk too much. About all this fighting there was at the time, and indeed since, the greatest discussion among the people of Webb, Getty, Birney, and Wadsworth. Those of the last-named officer maintained that they drove the enemy on the Plank Road, and that one of their brigades swept the front, while the 2d corps was lying behind their breastworks. Birney's men, *per contra*, said that Wadsworth's attack amounted to nothing, although he himself appeared on the Plank Road and interfered with the order of battle.

4.30 P. M. The artillery on Gibbon's left suddenly opened, followed by sharp musketry.² This was the short rush made by the enemy when they broke through, just on the Plank Road, but were immediately driven out. Of his own accord General Burnside immediately put in a division to relieve the pressure. "The best thing Old Burn did during the day," as General Meade remarked.

7 P. M. While at dinner heard a little scattering musketry on the extreme right;³ and presently up gallops Captain Beaumont, followed by Lieutenant-Colonel Kent, in a great flurry, saying the 6th corps was broken and driven back, the enemy on the Germanna Plank, and that we had better look out and not get captured. General Meade, whose disposition was always to grow calmer and calmer as others got more excited, asked coolly, "And where are Upton's and Shaler's brigades, that Sedgwick said he could spare me this morning?" "I don't know, sir." "Do you mean to tell me," continued the general, "that the 6th corps is not to do any more fighting this campaign?" "I am fearful not, sir," replied Kent, who for the first and last time, as I believe, had lost his head. This stampede was the most disgraceful thing that happened to the celebrated 6th corps during my experience of

¹ *Ante*, pp. 159, 160.

² *Ante*, p. 161.

³ *Ante*, p. 162.

it. The handling of the 1st and 3d divisions on the 5th and 6th of May was slow and feeble, while that of the 2d division was beyond all praise.

Getty and Hancock were the stars of the Wilderness. The conduct of the latter was brilliant. The vigor with which he brought up his men on the 5th through a difficult country, and the skill and rapidity with which he pushed them into action, his punctual and dashing advance on the 6th, and his cheerful courage under reverse, justified the playful praise that General Meade once gave him, "Bully Hancock is the only one of my corps commanders who will always go right in when I order him."

The next day Grant made one of those short, pregnant remarks that characterize him. Turning to Meade, he said: "Joe Johnston would have retreated after two such days' punishment!" He had come with the idea that the Army of the Potomac had never been fought to the top of its bent, and he showed his observation and honesty in thus perceiving and admitting the inferiority of the Western Confederate armies.

As to the numbers on either side, I feel called on to differ with my friend, Colonel Swan; and the more, because he throws his authority on the side of the Confederate historians of to-day, who seek to belittle their own forces and to exaggerate ours; as if they had waged a short and weak war, and needed an excuse for failure! Thus Colonel Taylor dedicates his valuable book, "Four Years with General Lee," to the 8000 men who were "present for duty" at Appomattox; whereas about 28,000 men really surrendered there, of whom the greater part had been so exhausted by the pursuit that they had thrown away their arms.

Colonel Swan thinks Lee had about 52,000 men of all arms.¹ This is one of Swinton's blunders, who was much elated by some partial returns he had been permitted to see.

¹ Corrected to 60,000, *ante*, p. 120. — ED.

In that estimate, Longstreet's two divisions are *entirely omitted* ! The force of Lee (Taylor, pp. 125 and 176) was :

1st corps, Longstreet (2 divisions), say	10,000
2d corps, Ewell	17,079
3d corps, Hill	22,199
Provost marshal and unattached infantry	1,125
Cavalry	8,727
Artillery	4,854
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	63,984

The 3 corps of infantry, with 11 divisions, had about 49,278.

Of the Army of the Potomac and Burnside's 9th corps only the gross aggregates are given in Report of Secretary of War, 1865 (pp. 5 and 55), which are 120,384 for the Potomac army, and 20,780 for the 9th corps, a total of 141,164 on May 1, 1864. But this number is of no service, because it gives no details, and because we do not know that all this force crossed the Rapidan. Only a critical examination of the Washington archives will determine the exact numbers opposed ; and meantime I must rely on my own notes, which are usually pretty accurate.

2d corps, Hancock	28,000
5th corps, Warren	24,000
6th corps, Sedgwick	26,000
Cavalry, Sheridan	13,000
Engineers	2,000
Artillery	4,000
Provost marshal	3,000
9th corps, Burnside	21,000
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	121,000

Of these, according to a recent opinion of General Humphreys, much more than one seventh were extra-duty men, employed in the vast quartermaster, commissary, medical, and signal services. Taking away one seventh, or 17,000, we have 104,000 officers and men in line of battle. Much extra-duty

work was among the Confederates performed by negroes, and their various administrative services were small. General Humphreys was of the opinion that the reported aggregate of Lee's army meant the line of battle. Taking these data, we should have, in round numbers, a Union army of 104,000 opposed to a Confederate of 64,000, or as 5 to 3; or, if we take only the infantry, then as 84,000 to 49,000, or as 12 to 7.¹

¹ *Vide note, ante, p. 120.*

VII

THE SIXTH CORPS IN THE WILDERNESS

BY

BREVET BRIGADIER-GENERAL HAZARD STEVENS

U. S. V.

Read before the Society February 14, 1887

THE SIXTH CORPS IN THE WILDERNESS

AFTER the failure of Mine Run in 1863, the Army of the Potomac went into winter quarters about Culpeper Court House. The troops were hutted in more comfortable fashion than ever before. Drills and inspections were resumed. Supplies were abundant. Towards spring convalescents and recruits were rapidly coming in, filling up the depleted regiments. Many visitors from the North, not a few of whom were ladies, were guests at the several camps. The monotony of camp life was enlivened by balls, entertainments, horse-races, and cock-fights. The Sanitary Commission did its utmost to promote the creature comforts of the troops, and the Christian Commission provided large tents for holding religious services, which were sometimes desecrated by nigger minstrel shows and midnight suppers. The troops were in good condition and good heart. There was general confidence in the success of the next campaign, but all, and especially the veterans, looked forward to an arduous and bloody struggle.

In March, 1864, the five corps of the army were reduced to three, the 1st and 3d being broken up, and their troops distributed among the 2d, 5th, and 6th, and many changes were made of subordinate commanders with the view of promoting harmony and concert of action in the coming campaign. The 3d division of the 6th corps was broken up, and the brigades of Wheaton and Eustis assigned to the 2d division as its 1st and 4th brigades respectively, and the brigade of Shaler became the 4th brigade of the 1st division. The 3d division of the old 3d corps was incorporated with the 6th corps as its 3d division.

The corps was partially filled up with recruits and convalescents, and when the campaign opened mustered 49 regiments of infantry, containing 22,584 officers and men effective, and 9 batteries of artillery with 48 guns and 1579 officers and men effective, making a total effective strength of 24,163. The regiments averaged only 460 officers and men each. The infantry were organized into three divisions, the 1st and 2d of four brigades each, the 3d of three brigades. The artillery formed a brigade by itself.

Major-General John Sedgwick commanded the corps. Brigadier-Generals Horatio G. Wright, George W. Getty, and James B. Ricketts commanded the 1st, 2d, and 3d divisions, respectively. They were all good soldiers, brave, cool, resolute, and capable, and loyal to their commanders, without a trace of that dilatory or critical spirit to which no small share of the mishaps of the Army of the Potomac must be attributed. With the exception of a few, who were soon weeded out, the brigade commanders, four of whom were colonels, were also soldierly and competent men. Several were more than this; and among others General David A. Russell, who was killed at the battle of the Opequan or Winchester, September 19, 1864, General Frank Wheaton, and Colonel Emory Upton, who won his star soon afterwards at Spottsylvania, leading the gallant charge of twelve picked regiments on the 10th May, showed the stuff of true soldiers and able commanders. Sedgwick was a methodical, sagacious, and resolute man. He was also genial and buoyant in disposition. He possessed the confidence and love of his troops, and had impressed upon them something of his own steadfastness. They believed in "Uncle John," as they affectionately called him, and they believed in "Uncle John's Corps," as they called themselves.

Sedgwick was noted for his care of his troops, as the following incident well illustrates. Wheaton's brigade, which had been serving in West Virginia, on its return to the corps, arrived at Brandy Station in midwinter, in the midst

of a driving storm of rain, and debarked from the cars upon the soaked and muddy ground. All the available groves of timber had been long since occupied by the other troops, and there seemed no recourse for the travel-worn and bedraggled men but to bivouac in the open muddy fields until they could haul timber from the woods several miles distant, an almost impossible task in the existing state of the roads. As the officers were disconsolately looking about and wondering where they could go and how escape these discomforts, a large, stalwart horseman, in a plain cavalry overcoat, rode up, splashing through the mud, and said, "General Wheaton, you may put your men in those woods," pointing out an extensive grove of pines near by which was already occupied by the headquarters of a brigade commander with widespread huts, horse-sheds, quarters for guards, orderlies, cooks, servants, etc., monopolizing the whole tract. Preceding the troops, who immediately started for the welcome shelter, Sedgwick, for the horseman was no other, called out the astonished and disconcerted general, whose cosy winter arrangements were about to be so rudely disturbed, and quietly ordered him to vacate the greater part of the grove forthwith, in which the troops soon sheltered themselves with their axes.

Of General Getty, my old commander, I must say a word. Modest and retiring, he combined high ideals of military duty and discipline, great firmness and resolution, and prompt decision and readiness of resource in emergencies. He had, too, no small spice of dash and enterprise. Personally he was kind and considerate to his subordinates, and while holding them to strict discipline, never meddled with details or with their methods of doing their work, provided only that it was well done. Sincere and straightforward, his nature was thoroughly loyal, loyal to his country, to his superiors, to his companions in arms, to any and all who had claims upon him. I was his chief of staff, and intimately associated with him for nearly three years. I never knew him to do an unjust act.

I cannot now point out a single instance where his military judgment was wrong, a single emergency where he failed to act precisely as he should have acted.

"I always obey an order," he once remarked. "If I was ordered to march my division across the Atlantic Ocean, I'd do it. At least," he added, observing a smile on the faces of his auditors, "I would march them up to their necks in the sea, and then withdraw and report that it was impracticable to carry out the order."

At the siege of Suffolk in April, 1863, he discovered, while reconnoitring outside the town, that the enemy under Longstreet were planting guns and making preparations to cross the narrow Nansemond River and invest our position on every side. At daylight, just as they were about to launch their pontoons, a storm of shot and shell from Getty's guns, brought three miles from Suffolk and skillfully posted in the night above, below, and opposite the proposed crossing-place, fell upon them like lightning from a clear sky, and soon silenced and demolished their batteries and frustrated their efforts.

For three weeks Getty, with inferior and scanty forces, working night and day, baffled every effort to force the passage, erected a strong continuous line of works, with a broad military road behind it for seven miles along the river, and finally, throwing a party of 250 men across the stream in a ferry-boat converted into a gunboat, captured their strongest battery, with 5 guns, 5 officers, and 248 men, and held it for 16 hours, then withdrawing every man and gun.

At Cedar Creek, when every infantry division save his was broken and in flight, he deliberately moved back in line, took position upon a ridge only 100 yards in rear, extended his command in one thin line, and for an hour hurled back repeated heavy assaults of Early's columns. When the enemy at length were pushing past his right flank, taking advantage of a lull in their attack, he again fell back in line as orderly as on parade, and took up a second position two miles

in rear, covering the Valley Pike, and brought up and posted there the other two divisions of the corps, which by his stubborn stand were enabled to rally and re-form. "I renewed the battle on Getty's line," says Sheridan. Nothing but Getty's military sagacity and resolution and the stubborn fighting of that incomparable division, made it possible to retrieve Cedar Creek. Without Getty there would have been no line there.

I have narrated in a former paper before the Society the part taken by Getty in the storming of the lines of Petersburg April 2, 1865, and how, when advancing against the inner lines, his exposed flank being threatened by a force of infantry and artillery on his left, he pushed his troops rapidly forward, utterly disregarding the enfilade and reverse fire of the flanking force, until they found themselves about to be cut off from their works and were forced to scamper back at double-quick.

I will mention but one more incident illustrating Getty's readiness of resource. After recovering from his wound at the Wilderness, returning to his command, he was placed in charge of convoying an immense supply train from the White House on the Pamunkey across the Peninsula to the James with a force of about 2500, consisting of two regiments of hundred days men, 700 dismounted cavalymen, and a new negro regiment.

The second day out Fitzhugh Lee, with two divisions of cavalry, fell upon the train. At the first alarm the hundred days men fired into each other and took to the woods in flight. Getty parked his train, deployed the dismounted cavalymen, his only veterans, against the enemy in skirmish order, broke up the black regiment and distributed them among his troopers on the skirmish line, three or four to each old soldier, and going along the line told the blacks to stick to the white soldiers and obey them, and ordered the latter to hold their ground and make the niggers fight. This ingenious plan worked well. Every trooper felt like a brigadier-general. The

blacks, inspired with confidence by their white commanders, stood and fought well. After a severe brush, Lee was repulsed and retreated, and Getty, gathering up his fugitive hundred days men, continued his march next day without further molestation. It was on this occasion that he handed his watch and papers to his aide, Captain Henry Murray, with instructions to deliver them to his wife in case he fell.

It was owing chiefly to the fact that the corps was so well commanded in all its parts that it went through the terrible struggles and enormous losses of the Wilderness and Valley campaigns with comparatively so little impairment of its morale and efficiency. Under the severest losses and fatigues of that terrible campaign the corps never lost its discipline, its pluck, or its confidence in itself. It became a byword in the army that, whenever any part of the 6th corps got into a fight, the rest were sure to come speeding up to its support.

The corps as a whole was in excellent condition and morale, especially the 1st and 2d divisions, which were not surpassed by any troops in the army.

The celebrated Vermont brigade, 2d of the 2d division, and the Maine and some of the New Jersey and New York regiments were splendid specimens of the best types of American soldiery. Twenty thousand such veterans would have added more real strength to the army than the 50,000 raw men, many of them in raw regiments, that actually joined it before and during the campaign.

The breaking up of the 1st and 3d corps was a great mistake. These troops had a good record, and took great pride in it and in their corps organizations and badges. Their very sacrifices upon former fields, by which they had become much reduced in numbers, were put forward to justify consolidating them with other troops. Thus their well-earned pride was turned to bitterness, their morale was impaired, and though too patriotic and brave not to overcome these feelings at length and do their duty, yet the bitter fruit of the blunder

PATERSON:
20 DIVISION
10 BRIGADE

was felt on more than one battle-field. During the winter the War Department was reorganizing the 9th corps under Burnside, making use of the popularity of the commander and the name of the corps to facilitate gathering together a large body of essentially green troops. Had the 1st and 3d corps been preserved and with the others of the Army of the Potomac filled up with recruits and strengthened with the regiments which went to form the new 9th corps, the army thus organized would have been far more homogeneous, reliable, and effective than the same forces differently organized with which Grant fought the Battle of the Wilderness, and might have inflicted a decisive defeat upon its antagonist.

The historian cannot too strongly or too often expose the glaring and inexcusable blunder of the administration in suffering the veteran regiments to be decimated in battle and worn out in service without an effort to repair their strength, and in raising green regiments instead; and this wasteful policy was pursued despite the teachings of history and the remonstrances of every American commander from Washington to Grant.

In sober fact, the politicians who were running the government, and whom it is now the fashion to beslobber with indiscriminate eulogy, had not sufficient faith in the patriotism of the people. While the masses were all absorbed in the necessity of crushing the rebellion, urgent for strong measures, ready to undergo any privation, do anything, spend everything for the cause, the politicians feared that strong measures would lose votes, and therefore deemed it a political necessity to coax and bribe men to serve their country instead of compelling their service as a sacred duty. True, the state governors and authorities, who had to do the enlisting and raising of troops in the first instance, favored this false and wasteful policy, because it gave more offices to bestow upon their friends, and it was deemed easier to induce men to enlist in new regiments than in old ones.

But these are poor excuses. Had Congress early passed the necessary acts, the people would have cheerfully sustained them, and the army would have hailed conscription with delight and confidence. The moral weakness of the administration is to blame for the ignoble and demoralizing shifts to fill or avoid their quotas of troops resorted to by so many states and communities during the latter part of the war.

By the 2d of May everything was prepared and the orders were issued for the advance.

According to the careful estimates of Humphreys in his "Virginia Campaign of 1864-65," the three infantry corps of the Army of the Potomac mustered 73,390 officers and enlisted men effective, the cavalry corps under General Philip H. Sheridan, 12,424, the artillery, 10,230, with 274 guns; which, with 3394 provost guards and engineers, made up a grand total of 99,438 officers and men present for duty equipped. Besides these, the 9th corps was posted along the line of the railroad from Washington to the Rappahannock, having just relieved the 5th corps in that duty, and numbered 22,708, with 42 guns, making the total Union effective force of all arms 120,146. Humphreys says that only 6000 men of the 9th corps had any seasoning as soldiers. One division of it was composed wholly of negro troops, just raised, which were not put into action until the Mine affair.

Lee's army on the other hand, according to Humphreys, comprised 61,958 effective officers and men, of all arms, with 224 guns. The 2d and 3d corps under Ewell and Hill held the line of the Rapidan from Barnett's Ford, five miles above the railroad crossing, to Morton's Ford, thirteen miles below, with cavalry picketing the fords above and below these points, and Longstreet with two divisions of his corps, the 1st, lay at Gordonsville in reserve. His 3d division, under Pickett, 5000 strong, was on the south of James River.

Humphreys's estimate of Lee's strength is manifestly too small, as he himself intimates. The latest report of the 1st

corps before the campaign opened was of March 31; of the rest of the army, April 20; and Humphreys simply consolidates the figures there given. But the enemy were making every effort to fill up their army, and men were coming in rapidly all through the spring. As usual with them, too, they allowed many men to go home on furlough in winter, and it is not probable that all of these were back as early as the date of these reports. Humphreys puts Longstreet's two divisions at 8417, the number in the report of March 31, but states that Colonel Taylor, in his "Four Years with General Lee," gives them as 10,000 enlisted men. Yet after all their severe losses in the Wilderness and at Spottsylvania, the report of Longstreet's corps for June 30 shows 14,158 officers and men.

In brief, it is plain that Lee had an army of at least 75,000 effective. General J. E. B. Stuart commanded his cavalry, the greater part of which wintered in the peninsula between the York and Rappahannock rivers, and was now assembled at Hamilton's Crossing, south of Fredericksburg.

Agreeably to orders the 6th corps broke camp at daylight May 4, and moved, the 2d division in the lead, following the 5th corps. As the sun rose into the heavens, the day became bright and warm. Many of the troops, especially the raw recruits, had loaded themselves down with much useful and useless impedimenta, and long before reaching the river the road was littered with thousands of overcoats, blankets, knapsacks, and articles of clothing thrown aside by them. Some of the men kept exchanging their things for those cast upon the ground, while others were picking up and accumulating more and more of such goods, and struggled and sweated on under increasing loads until forced, by inability to keep up or by their officers, to throw away their prizes. I well recollect a little, dumpy, round-shouldered soldier, apparently a German Jew as to nationality, who was struggling along out of the ranks, and who had so loaded himself down with nice new

coats and blankets that he resembled an enormous animated pack supported upon two short sturdy legs. He was well-nigh breathless and exhausted, and evidently in the deepest distress at the necessity of abandoning any of his pelf. For several miles before reaching the ford the roadsides were fairly covered with abandoned clothing and accoutrements. This fact indicated a large number of raw men in the 5th corps, for neither the discipline nor experience of veterans would allow of their loading themselves down at the beginning of a campaign, or throwing away necessary articles on the first march.

On reaching the Germanna Ford a halt of considerable time was made to allow the 5th corps to clear the road. Early in the afternoon the 6th corps crossed the Rapidan by a pontoon bridge, and resumed its advance on the Germanna Plank Road leading to the Wilderness, marching left in front, so as to front into line facing the enemy at a moment's notice. The artillery and ammunition wagons and ambulances took the road, the troops marched along on the right skirt or edge of the road, the side next the enemy, with flankers thrown out a hundred paces in the thicket.

After advancing in this way about two miles from the river, the corps went into bivouac for the night, the advance division, the 2d, upon Flat Bush Creek, and pickets were thrown out connecting on the left with those of the 5th corps, and extending in front of the road back to the river.

The 5th corps advanced to the Wilderness Tavern, a mile in front of which, on the Fredericksburg and Orange Court House Pike, its leading division took up a strong position.

The 2d corps crossed the Rapidan at Ely's Ford and advanced to Chancellorsville.

The several divisions of cavalry under Sheridan covered the movement on every side as prescribed ; the immense artillery reserve and trains were crossing at Culpeper Mine and Ely fords, guarded by 1200 infantry from each corps.

The 9th corps was rapidly marching to the front along the railroad, abandoning it as it passed, and dropping direct connection with Washington.

Thus every part of the vast host performed the task allotted to it with the precision of a great machine.

Another half-day's march by the 2d corps would place that formidable body of troops on the Catharpin Road abreast with, and on the left of, the other two corps, and the Army of the Potomac could then move forward against its antagonist upon three parallel roads, sufficiently extended to enable each part to deploy quickly and get into action, yet concentrated within supporting distance, while the 9th corps was only a day's march behind and moving up.

Accordingly such a forward movement was ordered for the next morning at 5 A. M., Hancock with the 2d corps to march to Shady Grove Church on the Catharpin Road, Warren with the 5th corps to Parker's Store on the Plank Road; Sedgwick with the 6th corps to Wilderness Tavern, leaving a division to guard Germanna Ford until relieved by Burnside's troops, — all in readiness to move forward. Wilson was to move to Craig's Meeting House on the Catharpin Road, sending parties well out on all the roads in front and flank, as well as on the Orange Court House Plank and Pike roads. Sheridan with the other two divisions was dispatched against the enemy's cavalry at Hamilton's Crossing. The reserve artillery was to move to Corbin's Bridge, the trains to Todd's Tavern.

The Wilderness is a gently undulating tract of low ridges and swampy swales alternating, covered with a dense second growth of small pines intermixed with oaks, ash, and walnut, and thick and matted underbrush in patches almost impenetrable. It is from ten to twelve miles across in any direction. The main roads which traverse it and a few clearings, widely separated, let but little daylight into the dense, gloomy, and monotonous woods.

Once off the roads, it is exceedingly difficult to manœuvre troops through this region, and almost impossible to preserve their orderly formation, or to keep them in any given direction when in motion. The woods are almost impenetrable to horsemen, and aides and orderlies were baffled and bewildered in them. The tactical skill or personal example and influence of commanders, so all-important on the battle-field, is lost in this dismal forest. Unable to see but a hundred yards, unable to fix or direct the movement of troops but through this narrow range of vision, they could only form and deploy properly and make the right connections on the flank at the outset, and then start them forward with the certainty that the lines would soon become crooked and disordered, and might, as actually occurred on several occasions, on reaching the enemy, offer an exposed flank or rear to his attack, instead of striking him with the full force of a well-ordered front.

The 6th corps moved at seven o'clock on the morning of the 5th, leaving the 3d division to guard the ford. The 1st division, Wright, with Neill's 3d brigade of the 2d division, was moved up in line through the woods to support the right of the 5th corps. Getty's division, the 2d, except Neill's brigade, was massed near the tavern and awaited orders.

Warren moved forward in the morning, according to orders, toward Parker's Store by the cross-road, from his position to that point. His leading division, Crawford's, advanced some three miles to Chewning's Farm, where it was halted and thrown into position on the high ground, for the enemy under Ewell was found in force about two and a half miles out on the Pike.

Griffin's division at once attacked him, and Wadsworth's division, with one brigade of Crawford's and one of Robinson's, was pushed forward to support his left, while Wright's 1st division of the 6th corps, with Neill's brigade (3d) of 2d division advanced on Griffin's right. Griffin's attack was at first successful, but the enemy speedily developed and

brought up a superior force, forced back his right, and then his whole division, with the loss of two guns. The troops of the 6th corps could not make their way through the dense woods and underbrush in time. The troops advancing on Griffin's left also failed to get up until after his repulse, and then arrived in front of the enemy with their lines quarter-wheeled to the right, and the left flank offered to and inviting his attack. The enemy quickly seized the advantage, fell upon them, and tumbled them back in some disorder. The result of this moving in the dark was that Crawford's division had to be drawn in a mile, and the 5th corps took a defensive line, with its right on the Pike, and extending to the left.

Sedgwick's troops extended the line to the right. Seymour's brigade of the 3d division came up from the ford and joined late in the afternoon. The enemy attacked sharply and were repulsed, and later, about 5 in the afternoon, Neill's brigade of the 2d division, and Seymour's of the 3d, and Penrose's 1st brigade of the 1st division attacked the enemy in his position, already well intrenched, without success, but suffering heavy loss. Night fell with both sides facing each other in position across the Pike and well intrenched.

As soon as Warren's movements and the reports from the cavalry at Parker's Store had shown that the enemy was in fighting force and mood on the Pike and Plank roads, orders were sent to Hancock to halt at Todd's Tavern, but the head of his column had advanced two miles beyond that point when he received the order.

At noon Colonel Theodore Lyman of General Meade's staff delivered an order to General Getty—whose division, except Neill's brigade, it will be remembered, was massed near the Old Wilderness Tavern—to hasten to the junction of the Plank and Brock roads, hold that point, and support the cavalry which was being driven in from Parker's Store.

The division marched at once and rapidly. Just as its

commander, preceding it some distance, reached the cross-roads, a detachment of cavalry came flying down the Plank Road strung out like a flock of wild geese, and were soon out of sight, a few barely pausing to cry out that the rebel infantry were coming down the road in force, a statement corroborated by a few musket shots heard in the woods in front. Getty instantly hurried back an aide to bring his troops up at the double-quick. Surrounded by his staff and orderlies, with his headquarters flag flying overhead, he took post directly at the intersection of the roads. Soon a few gray forms were discerned far up the narrow Plank Road moving cautiously forward, then a bullet went whistling overhead, and another and another, and then the leaden hail came faster and faster over and about the little group until its destruction seemed imminent and inevitable. But Getty would not budge. "We must hold this point at any risk," he exclaimed, "our men will soon be up." In a few minutes, which seemed an age to the little squad, the leading regiments of Wheaton's brigade, the 1st, came running like greyhounds along the Brock Road until the first regiment passed the Plank Road, and then, at the commands "Halt!" "Front!" "Fire!" poured a volley into the woods and threw out skirmishers in almost less time than it takes to tell it. Dead and wounded rebel skirmishers were found within thirty yards of the cross-roads, so nearly had they gained it, and from these wounded prisoners it was learned that Hill's corps, Heth's division in advance, supported by Wilcox's division, was the opposing force.

One fellow among these prisoners caused much amusement by his ready and somewhat impudent replies. "Robert E. mount have 100,000 or he mount have 200,000 men," he said, when asked as to Lee's force. "I don't reckon Robert E. intends to fight here, but if he does, he'll whop you sure." Finally he exclaimed, as he was taken off, "Sure enough, Robert E. has n't many men, but what he's got are right

good ones, and I reckon you 'll find it out before you leave yere."

A severely wounded orderly, a dead horse, and two bullet holes through the headquarters flag were the only casualties of this bold stand.

No time was lost in forming the division in two lines in front of the Brock Road, Wheaton's brigade in the centre astride the Plank, Eustis, 4th, on the right, Grant's Vermonters, the 2d, on the left. Efforts were made to communicate directly through the woods on the right front with Warren's left, but without success, because the enemy was found in force between. For the next two hours, save the desultory fire of skirmishers, everything was quiet. The enemy was evidently getting into position, no easy matter in the dense woods. Getty's second line, just in front of the road, labored to throw up breastworks.

This point is the very centre and type of the Wilderness. The scrubby woods and tangled thickets stretch away on every side, interminably to all appearance. The narrow roads offer the only means of going anywhere or of seeing anything. Once off, then low ridges and hollows succeed each other, without a single feature to serve as a landmark, and no one but an experienced woodsman with a compass could keep his bearings and position or preserve his course.

Meanwhile orders were sent to Hancock to move up the Brock Road to the Plank Road, in readiness to advance on Parker's Store. He had already advanced several miles on the Catharpin Road past the junction of the Brock Road with the former, on receipt of these orders, but at once counter-marched and turned off on the Brock. At half-past three the head of his column, Birney's division, came up, and as rapidly as possible was formed on Getty's left, extending along and in front of the road.

Getty now took ground more to the right, placing Wheaton's brigade wholly on the right of the Plank. A section of

Ricketts's Pennsylvania battery, of the 2d corps, was planted at the cross-roads, the only point where it could be used.

Meanwhile army headquarters had been urging Getty to attack, if practicable; but that cool veteran, convinced that the enemy were far stronger in numbers than his command, withheld his attack until Hancock could get up and go in with him, in which view he was fully sustained by that officer. At length, about four o'clock, General Meade ordered Getty to attack at once without waiting for the 2d corps, an order immediately reiterated by Colonel Lyman in person. The division, being in perfect readiness, moved forward without a moment's delay.

Ricketts's two guns were moved up the Plank by hand with the second line, which here was within sixty yards of the front line. The lines struggled and pushed their way through the dense thickets, becoming more and more crooked and disordered, and soon drew the fire of the enemy. He was found in strong force overlapping the division on both flanks. In the centre he was pressed back a short distance, but the contest at once became a heavy pounding match between masses of brave and determined men. The lines did not move much. Both sides hugged the ground, or whenever possible sought the partial shelter of a ridge, and kept up a steady fire.

Getty's division, weakened by the detachment of Neill's 3d brigade, which ranked second only to the Vermonters, mustered 14 regiments and 6000 effective. Its antagonists comprised two full divisions, Heth's and Wilcox's, having 28 regiments and 12,000 to 14,000 effective. They strengthened and renewed their lines wherever they showed signs of weakness or disorder. The musketry was terrific and continuous. Usually when infantry meets infantry the clash of arms is brief. One side or the other speedily gives way. Here neither side would give way, and the steady firing rolled and crackled from end to end of the contending lines, as if it would never cease. Manœuvring was impossible. But little could be seen

of the enemy. Whenever any troops rose to their feet and attempted to press forward, they became a target for the half-hidden foe, and lost severely.

At half-past five, after this bushwhacking combat had lasted an hour, numbers of the enemy were noticed jumping across the Plank Road from side to side, about a hundred yards in front of our first line. Ricketts's section kept firing at these squads with canister, but they always seemed to jump aside just in time to escape injury. At length the object of this performance was seen; namely, to draw the fire of our guns, when the enemy charged in force on both sides of the road. Our lines bent inward without breaking, and for an instant the assailants reached and planted a color at Ricketts's guns; but as the seasoned bow when strongly bent springs back with redoubled force, so the men of the white cross, who had momentarily given ground, with a cheer rushed forward upon the enemy and drove them headlong.

It has been claimed that troops of the 2d corps retook these guns. Part of that corps was posted at the cross-roads in support, and may have moved up when the guns were endangered, but as an eye-witness, I know that the brave Vermonters and men of the 1st brigade next the Plank surged forward at the crisis without orders and drove the enemy from the guns, and that the presence of the 2d corps made no difference in the result. I know, too, that Hancock in the evening claimed that his troops recaptured the guns, and that Getty was indignant thereat, and earnestly protested that his division retook them unaided.

It was only by the most stubborn fighting that the division held its ground, outnumbered and outflanked by Hill's two large divisions.

All this time the 2d corps was getting into position as rapidly as possible, — impeded as it was by the narrow road, blocked with artillery and men, and the dense and tangled woods, — and formed on Getty's left, first Birney's division, next Mott's,

next Gibbon's. Barlow, except Frank's brigade, on the left, "was thrown forward on high clear ground in front of the Brock Road, which commanded the country for some distance on the right and left, and covered the bed of the Fredericksburg and Orange Court House unfinished railroad," says Humphreys.¹

Here, too, the only ground offering effective range, all the artillery was posted except Ricketts's section on the Plank, and a battery, Dow's 6th Maine battery, which was at Mott's left. Frank's brigade was posted across the Brock Road, on the extreme left. Carroll's brigade of Gibbon's division came up in support of Getty's right. Owen's brigade of Gibbon's division was placed on either side of the Plank Road. Smyth's and Brooke's brigades from Barlow's division went in on the extreme left, and drove back Hill's right some distance, and with Birney's division and Mott's division greatly relieved the pressure upon the Vermonters, but the hard fighting was kept up until night put an end to it.

After dark Getty's division was relieved by the 2d corps, and withdrawn from the front line. Not all, however. One thousand men of the Vermont brigade, as reported by its officers, lay dead and wounded upon the ground they had so well defended, and the losses in the 1st and 4th brigades were nearly as severe.

General Getty always regarded this as the hardest fought battle he ever knew. He always insisted and dwelt upon the superiority of the enemy in numbers, and when after the surrender at Appomattox he met Heth and Wilcox, whom he knew well before the war, his first questions were as to their force in this fight, and he was not surprised to find his estimate fully confirmed.

In wresting the cross-roads from Hill's corps, Getty and his brave division saved the army from disaster. That junc-

¹ The Virginia Campaign of 1864 and 1865, by General A. A. Humphreys, p. 31.

tion was a key-point of vital importance ; and the occupation of it by the enemy's strong column would have cut the Union army in two, separating the 2d corps from the 5th and 6th, exposed to capture the entire artillery reserve then moving up the Plank Road from Chancellorsville, and would have enabled Hill to strike the right wing in flank and rear while it was held by Ewell in front.

While the pounding match was going on between Hill and Getty, Wadsworth, with his division of the 5th corps, and Baxter's brigade of the 2d division, attempted about 5 P. M. to move from the left of the 5th corps position in a southwest direction in order to strike the enemy engaged with Getty upon the flank and rear ; but his progress was so impeded by the tangled woods and thickets that he only encountered the enemy's skirmishers or flankers, whom he drove before him, when night fell and he was forced to halt in line facing south or southwest in the midst of the woods.

The corps commanders were all ordered to attack at five the next morning, but Hancock was expected to strike the heaviest blow upon the left. To aid him, Burnside's three white divisions were ordered up from Germanna Ford, and that officer, leaving Stevenson's division at the tavern, was with the other two, Willcox's and Potter's, to be in position on the left and front of the 5th corps, and to advance with the rest of the army at five o'clock, get possession of the high ground about Chewning's, and fall upon Hill's rear and flank.

To protect the flank from Longstreet's threatened approach, Hancock left Gibbon with part of his own and all of Barlow's division and the artillery to hold the position taken up by them on the day before. With all the rest of his troops deployed in four lines, — Birney and Mott in front, on the right and left of the Plank, Getty's division in two lines in support, the Vermonters on the left, Wheaton in the centre crossing the road, Eustis on the right, Carroll's and Owen's brigades of Gibbon's division on the right and left of Getty, — he

swept down upon the enemy. Again the forest resounded with musketry. The pounding match was resumed, but the pressure upon Hill's troops, weakened by the fearful struggle of the preceding afternoon, was too great for them long to sustain. After an hour's fierce struggle they were slowly forced back, fighting stubbornly, and our troops pushed forward with redoubled vigor.

The enemy lost ground rapidly. A mile from the cross-roads Wadsworth's division of the 5th corps came sweeping in from the right, driving the enemy in great confusion, and all joined together and pressed on after the now almost routed foe. Hundreds of prisoners were taken, passed along the lines to the Plank Road, and started down it to find the provost guards for themselves. The road was thronged with these prisoners, frightened and anxious to get out of fire, wounded men and stretcher-bearers, all flocking to the rear, with an occasional staff officer forcing his way through the throng.

As our troops advanced, the fire of our own guns fell upon them and inflicted some loss. I was sent back to stop this artillery fire, which I did, and returned by the Plank Road. As I approached the front, the enemy's guns were enfilading the Plank Road with a sharp fire of shell and shrapnel. Knowing that if I left the road and attempted to ride through the woods, I would be an indefinite time in rejoining my commander, I set spurs to my horse and went up the road at top speed, when suddenly I was almost stunned and covered with smoke and dust by a shell bursting apparently in my very face. I felt a blow just below the knee, thought, "There goes a leg," my horse swerved and then jumped forward, and the next instant I was among the group on a little knoll by the roadside, consisting of Getty and his staff, receiving congratulations at my escape. My only hurt was an ugly cut just below the right knee, from a piece of shell.

The troops, still advancing, encountered heavy artillery fire

from batteries on both sides of the road which were effectually masked by the dense scrub. General Getty, in compliance with orders from General Birney, now moved his division wholly on the left of the road, but soon after on his responsibility moved Wheaton's and Eustis's brigades back to the right, as that side seemed nearly bare of troops and the enemy was threatening an attack. All this time the Union troops were steadily advancing, driving the enemy in some disorder and taking many prisoners, and had reached a point within a mile of Parker's Store. The advance was necessarily very slow and laborious, and the lines became much broken, disordered, and disconnected.

The threatened attack on the right at length burst with great fury.

Longstreet, who had brought his corps up to Parker's Store, now moved forward to take Hill's place. Field's division of his corps, supported by Anderson's division of Hill's corps, which had also just got up that morning from its position on the Rapidan, fell upon our right.

The line in front gave way. Wheaton and Eustis stepped into the gap and stubbornly held the enemy. Kershaw's division of Longstreet's corps advanced against our left, which was further advanced than the right, and forced it back somewhat. The Vermonters on that side of the Plank Road were now in the front line, and the firing grew heavier on both sides.

While this contest was raging in front, four brigades of the enemy — viz., Wofford's of Kershaw's division, Anderson's of Field's division, Mahone's of Anderson's division, and Davis's of Heth's division — filed by the right flank down the bed of the unfinished Fredericksburg and Orange Court House Railroad, formed facing north, and about noon advanced and fell with fatal force upon the flank and rear of the Union troops, disordered and intermingled in their long advance through the tangled thickets.

Frank's brigade of Barlow's division, says General Francis A. Walker in his history of the 2d corps, which had already lost heavily and was nearly out of ammunition, was struck on end, broken into fragments, and hurled back in dire disorder. The next troops encountered comprised McAllister's brigade of Mott's division, and they too, although they had partially changed front on the alarm given by the attack on Frank, were quickly overlapped, crushed, and driven back.

Advised now by the firing and shouting of the turning column of the success of this movement against our flank, the Confederate divisions of Kershaw, Field, and Anderson threw themselves with great impetuosity upon the front of the Union forces, and after a desperate struggle our troops began to give way.

The Vermonters, according to the report of their brigade commander, Colonel L. A. Grant, held their ground until the troops on the right and left were forced back and the enemy's fire was coming in from both flanks. Then the order was given to rally on the Brock Road, and back these stanch regiments went, and stayed not on the order of their going. Yet, though terribly scattered and broken, the men lost none of their cool Yankee courage and intelligence, and every regiment soon re-formed upon the rallying road, sadly diminished in numbers indeed, but with its colors and organization intact.

On the left, says Walker, Mott's division was fast crumbling away under the fire upon their flank; on the right the heroic Wadsworth had been killed at the head of his division, and his regiments were staggering under the terrific blows of the encouraged and exultant enemy; in the centre Birney's division and the brigades of Carroll, Owen, and Webb, worn with fighting and depleted by their enormous losses, were being slowly pressed back down the Plank Road. Thousands of broken men were going to the rear, giving the onlooker the impression of a perfect rout.

Desperate but fruitless efforts were made by Meade and Hancock to stem the backward tide of broken men. At least three lines of battle came sweeping through the woods, one after the other, to be in turn shattered and forced back. Carruth's brigade of Stevenson's division of the 9th corps was then put in. A part of Willcox's division of that corps, probably Christ's 2d brigade, was also put in, for I myself met, shook hands, and exchanged a word with Colonel David Morrison of the 79th Highlanders, New York Volunteers, as his regiment was advancing.

It is impossible to give detailed movements or even to state with any accuracy the constantly changing positions of the several divisions, brigades, or regiments in this confused and blind bushwhacking, which broke, scattered, and dispersed in the forest, and which, sticking to the colors, went back slowly, resisting stubbornly at every ridge or rise of ground.

Enough that after a severe contest of two hours' duration the troops were all forced back to the Brock Road. The 2d division, 6th corps, throughout all this fighting and falling back held well together. Not a single regiment lost its colors or its organization, but many men were scattered and separated from their commands, and fell back singly or in small parties. Many of the other troops, however, were completely dispersed. The woods were filled with fugitives and scattered men, all making their way to the rear, while the musketry in front, now desultory and scattering, now breaking out in heavier volleys, nearer, clearer, deadlier than before, showed that some of their comrades of sterner stuff were still struggling manfully to check the victorious enemy.

Soon after this reverse movement commenced, General Getty was severely wounded in the shoulder and obliged to leave the field, turning over the command of the division to General Wheaton.

A little before that, a bullet coming directly from our left pierced my horse through the heart. He gave one convulsive

leap in the air and fell in a heap dead. I mounted the horse of an orderly.

When it was seen that no stand could be maintained farther in front than the Brock Road, all the officers exerted themselves to rally the troops upon the rude and incomplete breastworks thrown up along the road the afternoon before. Hundreds of fugitives were crossing the road and plunging out of sight into the woods in the rear, and others were going down the road to the right, and hundreds of others were breaking out of the woods into the open ground near the tavern. There was no panic. They were not running, but diligently making their way to a place of safety. Observing among them a number of white crosses, I called upon these men to stop and form line and help rally the others. The white crosses stopped at once, threw themselves into line, many others fell in with them, and in a short time I started up the road at the head of a motley column of several hundred determined men, and posted it in a vacant space behind the breastworks not far from the cross-roads. The men were rallying and forming fast. Every instant an officer would break out of the woods, followed by a column of men whom he had rallied, and file into position in the rapidly growing line. The alacrity and determination evinced by these whilom fugitives showed that it was clear grit and patriotism, not merely the force of discipline, which kept them up to the work.

While the Union troops were thus spontaneously re-forming themselves, the enemy, almost equally disordered and scattered, were also straightening out and re-forming their lines. The troops which made the fatal flank attack, after sweeping the forest nearly to the Plank Road, wound up with a volley which killed General Jenkins and severely wounded Longstreet. Doubtless this was an additional reason to Lee, who was present in person on this part of the field, to re-form his lines before pressing his advantage further. At all events

half an hour's respite of precious time was afforded the Union troops, which was improved to the utmost, as already narrated.

Soon after 4 P. M. the enemy again advanced and made desperate charges to carry our last defensive position, but all in vain. Everywhere he was handsomely repulsed. At one point only, at the cross-roads, he gained the breastworks, but was immediately driven out by Carroll's brigade of Gibbon's division of the 2d corps, which fortunately happened to be in the second line at that point. It is also claimed that Leasure's brigade, 2d of the 1st division, 9th corps, turned the scale at this critical moment. After a struggle of half an hour the enemy fell back into the woods, leaving the ground covered with his dead and wounded.

The Battle of the Wilderness on the left was over.

Late in the afternoon Leasure's small brigade of Stevenson's (1st) division, 9th corps, which had been sent to the extreme left to support Gibbon on that flank, deployed in front of, and at right angles to, our works, and swept along our whole front from left to right, clearing out the enemy's skirmishers and sharpshooters, but it encountered no force. The enemy, having withdrawn a few hundred yards, was doubtless engaged in taking up and fortifying his position.

During the afternoon the woods took fire and burnt over, the fire reaching even to our breastworks on the Brock Road, which were consumed in several places. Hundreds of the wounded of both sides, scattered through the great forest tract, five or six square miles, so stubbornly fought over, must have perished in the flames.

Efforts were made during the day to push General Burnside, with his two divisions, out on Warren's left, and upon the flank of the enemy on the Plank Road. It was two o'clock in the afternoon before he advanced, and his attack was not made early enough, or with sufficient vigor, to accomplish anything.

Warren and Sedgwick held the centre and right all day, making repeated bloody and useless attacks upon the enemy's intrenched position. Just at or before dusk the latter turned and enveloped Sedgwick's right, struck it with great force and suddenness, and almost in an instant shattered or swept away two brigades, — Seymour's of the 3d division and Shaler's of the 1st, — both of whom, with several hundred of their troops, were captured. Sedgwick at once drove out the enemy with Neill's 3d brigade of the 2d division and Upton's 2d brigade of the 1st division, and reëstablished his lines. During the night he took up a new position, re-forming his lines so as to cross the Germanna Plank and the road to Culpeper Mine Ford.

Sheridan was unable to carry out his orders, being obliged to remain in position to cover and guard the enormous trains.

Timid strategy and aggressive fighting were the distinguishing features of this battle on the Union side, characteristics which, it may be said, marked and marred Grant's entire campaign.

Humphreys and Walker give some sound criticisms which will well repay attention.

The first mistake was in not throwing the army further forward on the 4th of May and seizing and fortifying the line of Shady Grove Church, Parker's Store, and Robertson's Tavern.

This would have placed the army upon more open ground and in better position to advance either by the front or left.

The next mistake was in not resolutely pushing Hancock forward on the Catharpin Road on the 5th of May. Had he been allowed to push on, and fallen upon Lee at Parker's Store, what could have saved him from disaster? Getty, reinforced by one of Hancock's divisions, or by two brigades of the 6th corps, could have held Hill until the pressure of Hancock upon Lee's rear would have compelled both Hill and Ewell to face about.

Such a movement by Hancock, it is true, would have violated the rules of war, but it was necessary to take some risk.

The great difficulty was to bring all parts of the army to bear upon the enemy together; and Hancock, with his 25,000 men, might well have been trusted to sustain himself until the other corps in contact with the enemy could share his burden.

The great difficulty on the Plank Road on the second day was the massing of too many troops in a comparatively narrow field, where they were sure to be confused and get out of hand.

This, however, was more the fault of the ground than of the commanders. No time or opportunity was afforded them for reconnoitring the ground in front after the battle was joined, and nothing could be done but to push the troops forward and bear down the enemy by superior force and hard fighting.

VIII

THE OPERATIONS OF THE ARMY OF THE
POTOMAC MAY 7-11 1864

BY

BREVET BRIG.-GEN. CHARLES LAWRENCE PEIRSON
U. S. V.

Read before the Society November 10, 1879

THE OPERATIONS OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC MAY 7—11 1864

THE object of this paper is to give some account of the movements of the Army of the Potomac from the 7th to the 11th of May, 1864, inclusive. Before proceeding to the account of the operations of those days, it will be well to look at the situation of the armies as developed by the events of the preceding days.

The Army of the Potomac crossed the Rapidan River on the 4th of May. It then consisted¹ of 125,000 effective and non-effective men (including Burnside's command), 4300 wagons, 835 ambulances, and 56,500 animals; and was composed of the 2d corps, under Hancock; 5th corps, under Warren; and 6th corps, under Sedgwick; with artillery (300 guns), cavalry, and engineer brigade, besides the 9th corps, under Burnside. The latter was left temporarily behind to protect our communications, as far back as Bull Run, during the crossing. The army was in splendid condition, thoroughly armed, well officered, and, with the exception of the 9th corps (two thirds of whom were new troops), well disciplined, and accustomed to the hardships and dangers of actual warfare. The movements were to be under the direction of General Meade, but the whole army was under the personal command of General Grant.

Lee's Army of Northern Virginia occupied a strong position on the Rapidan, well protected by field-works in front, with the left flank covered by the river and mountains, and the right guarded by intrenchments extending from the river to Mine Run, — the same intrenchments of Mine Run, which

¹ 67 W. R. 277.

General Meade had wisely refused to storm the previous November.

Ewell's corps was on the right, A. P. Hill near Orange Court House, and Longstreet at Gordonsville. The morale of this army was admittedly good, it had cleared itself of all possible impediments, and was in condition for immediate action. It numbered, as stated by the commander of one of its divisions,¹ 50,000 men of all arms (42,000 infantry), doubtless all effective men, and nearly all of its chief commanders were graduates of West Point. As it had eight divisions of three or more brigades each, this estimate of 42,000 infantry is probably too small by perhaps 10,000.

The region known as the Wilderness, into which our army now entered, was a desolate country intersected with numerous small ravines and crossed by narrow county roads, and covered, with the exception of a few small open spaces, by a thick growth of scraggy pine and scrub oak with hard undergrowth. So dense and impenetrable was this growth that only about twenty guns were able to be used in the battles of the 5th and 6th, and the cavalry fought mainly dismounted. This country was crossed by two nearly parallel roads, the turnpike and the plank road running from Orange Court House (the centre of Lee's position) to Fredericksburg, and crossing our line of march nearly at right angles. Grant's plan of advance upon Richmond seems to have been to follow a line nearly parallel with the route of the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad, making his base Acquia Creek; and his intention was to turn well Lee's right flank, to avoid the Mine Run intrenchments, and march directly upon Spottsylvania, — from which point he could command several roads leading to Richmond, — prepared to accept battle from Lee wherever he met him, hoping, however, to meet him in the open country beyond the Wilderness. Orders were given for the movements of the

¹ Lee and Grant in the Wilderness, by General C. M. Wilcox, C. S. A., article on *Annals of the War*, Philadelphia, 1879, p. 485.

5th, which would have on that day placed the army outside the Wilderness, had there been no interruption.

Lee did not wait to be attacked, but immediately moved his whole army out from his intrenchments towards us by the before-mentioned turnpike and plank roads, intending to force a battle while we were still involved in the Wilderness. Notwithstanding the knowledge we had gained in the Mine Run campaign, we were without any but the most general information regarding the roads and paths of the Wilderness, while the country was familiar to the Confederates, giving them in this respect great superiority. Lee's effort was to break Grant's left and thus throw him back upon the Rapidan, but the successful crossing of his whole army in one day enabled us to employ our whole force and make such stubborn resistance and such determined counter-attacks as to prevent this. Burnside even had been able to come into action on the morning of the 6th.

It seems to have been unexpected by Grant and Meade to be attacked by Lee's whole army in the Wilderness, and the latter is said to have given his opinion in the beginning that only a division of the enemy were attacking while the remainder were on the way to the position of the North Anna. It gives color to this view that Hancock had been recalled from a march southward from Chancellorsville, after having proceeded ten miles, and brought back to hold the position on the Brock Road. The battles of the 5th and 6th had been terrible and bloody, with a loss on our side of over 15,000 men,¹ and a large, though from their superior knowledge of position not so large, a loss to the enemy; our communications with the Rappahannock were obstructed by some cavalry, and the wounded, who were sent in great numbers in army wagons in that direction, were recalled and sent to Fredericksburg,² where we soon established a new base and

¹ Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac, by William Swinton, p. 439. Revised edition, 1882. Compare footnote on page 120.

² 67 W. R. 278.

communication with Washington. The battle had continued with unabated fury until the night of the 6th. The Confederate lines were complete, as were ours, and the position substantially the same as was established the night of the 5th, neither side having secured any advantage. Hancock on the left of our line had borne the brunt of the heaviest fighting. He had been reinforced by Getty's division of the 6th corps and one brigade of Robinson's division of the 5th corps. On his right lay Burnside's corps, which had been put in to fill up the gap between Hancock and Warren. On Warren's right was Sedgwick with the 6th corps. The latter had been thrown into some confusion by a feeble attack after dark on his right, in which Generals Seymour and Shaler were captured, with some of their commands.

The intersection of the Brock Road (running south towards Spottsylvania) with the Orange Plank Road formed the key of Hancock's position. Here were seven lines of troops lying behind log breastworks within speaking distance of each other. So severe had been the attack at this point that some of the enemy had penetrated the line, but they were quickly driven back. The fire was so heavy that several of the rear lines, occupied by Birney's troops, at one time broke and fled, but recovering themselves soon returned. In front of the lines near this point the trees were scarred by bullets from their roots to their tops, and in great spaces the whole tops were mown down by bullets as with a scythe. The woods in front were full of dead and wounded men. In the rear they were full of stragglers, many of them from the 9th corps, whom the provost guard were arresting, forming, and restoring to their commands. The ground in front and rear was covered with arms, knapsacks, and clothing of the dead and wounded. Officers in those days lived on the rations found in discarded haversacks. The trains were far in the rear towards Chancellorsville, and did not come up.

Many of the troops had never before been in action, and

all had been marched hither and thither through the thick woods, fighting and retreating, until they were fairly tired out. Warren, for example, had during the second day received eighteen orders to send reinforcements to other parts of the line.¹ We had lost Wadsworth, Hayes, and scores of officers of lower grade, and thousands of killed and wounded. We had met with no apparent success, we were in a country of gloom and desolation, no man knew what the morrow would bring forth; but the men were patient, brave, and determined, ready to resist any attack, but not anxious to assault. Neither were the enemy. They had learned the value of breastworks, if never before, and hereafter the army never stopped without immediately covering itself with intrenchments, even of the slightest.

This was the situation on the morning of the 7th. An early reconnoissance showed the enemy strongly covered by intrenchments similar to our own, and with no discernible intention of renewing the attack. Indeed Lee never was the attacking party again in this campaign, but adopted the offensive defensive course. General Grant says Lee had fallen back behind his intrenched lines, but these were not the intrenchments of Mine Run, now some eight miles in the Confederate rear, but improvised works like our own, and directly in our front. General Grant also says in his report:² "From this it was evident to my mind that the two days of fighting had satisfied Lee of his inability to further maintain the contest in the open field, notwithstanding his advantage of position, and that he would await an attack behind his works." The advantage of position consisted only in his better communication with his supplies, and his knowledge of the

¹ Letter of Brevet Major-General Gouverneur K. Warren, U. S. A., commanding 5th army corps.

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 6, 1879.

My Dear General Peirson: —

. . . I believe I received 18 orders to send reinforcements to other commands in the 2d day's battle in the Wilderness. . . .

Yours truly,

G. K. WARREN.

roads to be used in falling back or moving by the flank in rear of his defenses, thoroughly secured from observation. The features of the ground occupied were common to both armies.

But whether the position was more or less advantageous, Grant decided not to attack it, but to push on and put his whole force between Lee and Richmond, if possible. And showing that he divined the effect of this intention upon Lee, he said to a staff officer¹ as he sat under a pine-tree on the 7th, "To-night Lee will be retreating south." Lee did retreat south, but only for the purpose of intercepting the onward movement of Grant, and he retreated so rapidly that we found him in position at Spottsylvania when we emerged from the Wilderness. Nightfall of the 7th saw our whole army on the march for Spottsylvania, — Warren leading with Robinson's division by the most direct route, which was by the Brock Road, via Todd's Tavern, — leaving on the field all our dead and many of our wounded. Grant remarked that if Lee thought he was going to stop to bury his dead, he was mistaken, but a few days later he sent a cavalry force back with ambulances who succeeded in saving some of the wounded men. Two years after the battle the ground was revisited by some officers who found many skeletons unburied in the thick woods, although a burial force under the direction of the War Department had undertaken the duty of covering all the remains. We also left behind two guns which were on the turnpike in front of Warren's position, which were lost by Griffin on the 5th and were between the two armies until we retired. A brigade of Robinson's division vainly attempted a charge to retake them, but the plain was swept by canister at 350 yards, and the brigade returned with heavy loss. It was understood that the 6th corps was to join in this attempt; but General Upton, whose brigade lay on the right of Robinson, refused to move, saying, "It was madness!"² So sensitive were the enemy about this matter that

¹ Colonel Theodore Lyman.

² Remark to the writer.

they fired on our stretcher-bearers who advanced to bring in the wounded ; and the wounded were not brought in, but lay all night calling for water and help, to the great distress of their comrades.

The 7th was hot and dusty, and as it was necessary in order to clear the roads to move the trains by daylight, the movement was discerned by the enemy. The 5th corps in the advance, preceded by cavalry and followed by the 2d corps, took the Brock Road. The 6th corps moved by the Plank and Turnpike roads via Chancellorsville, preceded by the train, and followed by the 9th corps, who were the rear guard.

Sheridan's cavalry had been guarding the left flank, and had held the Brock Road for some distance beyond Todd's Tavern, the Catharpin Road as far as Corbin's Bridge, and our left rear as far as Piney Branch Church ; but when Longstreet attacked so successfully on the afternoon of the 6th, Sheridan received an order from General Humphreys,¹ chief of staff, informing him that our left was turned, and that he must draw in his forces to protect the flank and trains. This he did, and was occupied on the 7th in regaining some of the ground which he then gave up, and suffered considerable loss in driving the enemy back again beyond Todd's Tavern.

Lee had met with losses in the Wilderness almost as severe as our own, as he had been, what he never was afterwards, the attacking party, a disadvantage which even his superior knowledge of the country hardly offset. He had lost Generals Jones and Jenkins, besides Pegram and Stafford severely wounded, and, worse than all, Longstreet had been disabled by a bullet in the neck and shoulder. His men, however, were well in hand, and on the night of the 7th were marching toward Spottsylvania as rapidly as we were, and by as short a road.² His cavalry was thrown as far forward as possible,

¹ 67 W. R. 788.

² Letter of General R. H. Anderson to Captain Robins, M. H. S. M., *post*, p. 229.

and Stuart's command was ordered to hold their end of the Brock Road, and to place every obstruction to the advance of the Federal troops, in order to gain time for the rebel infantry to get into position at Spottsylvania. They therefore gave Sheridan all the trouble they could, and were only cleared out by the advance of our infantry.

The 5th corps, led by Robinson's division, marched all night, and about 6 A. M. on the morning of the 8th emerged from the Wilderness near Todd's Tavern, and after marching a mile or two came up with our cavalry, who, as evidenced by several dead cavalymen who lay by the roadside, had recently been engaged with the enemy.

As soon as the cavalry were got out of the way, Robinson's division at once deployed, with Lyle's brigade on the left and leading, the Maryland brigade coming up on his right, and Baxter's brigade supporting still further on the right. In this way they advanced, driving the skirmishers before them by and beyond Alsop's house, and, reaching a wooded knoll, re-formed the line, which had become somewhat disordered, casting off their knapsacks in order to move more quickly, and because the heat made them almost insupportable. Pushing forward again, they came in sight of a part of a light battery of the enemy which was firing down the Brock Road, and breaking into the run nearly captured the two guns, driving them well to the rear. The leading brigade had now advanced some two miles since its deployment, and had reached a heavily wooded rise of ground, where they halted for a moment to get breath and some alignment; and having run much of the distance, had left the rest of the division far behind. The men were very much blown, and many had fallen by the way from sunstroke and fatigue. General Warren here rode up, and saying to General Robinson that his orders were to go to Spottsylvania Court House, ordered him forward. Robinson asked for time to get up his other brigades, but after a few moments of waiting Warren became impatient,

and General Robinson ordered an immediate charge upon the enemy's line, then in plain sight behind some rude breastworks, saying, "We must drive them from there, or they will get some artillery in position."

The enemy's line was formed on a ridge across the Brock Road, near its junction with a road leading to the Block House, and was protected by an incomplete breastwork, with small pine-trees felled for abatis and a rail fence parallel with the line to the front. The enemy were hard at work finishing their breastworks. They were two brigades of Kershaw's division of Longstreet's corps.¹

Lyle's brigade, in which my regiment was, charged over 500 yards of open, badly gullied, ground under a rapid fire from the enemy's muskets and from the artillery we had so nearly captured. The troops went over the rail fence, into the abatis, and up to within 30 feet of the works, getting shelter then from the slope of the hill and the felled pine-trees. Here they lay to recover their wind, easily keeping down the fire of the enemy in their front, who fired hurriedly and aimlessly, and while waiting saw the 3d brigade (Marylanders) advancing gallantly across the field to their support. The latter, however, after getting halfway to the rebel works, broke under the enemy's fire from the right and retreated in confusion, General Robinson being shot in the knee while trying to rally them. The remaining brigade was too far to the right and rear to assist in this assault. Lyle's brigade, having rested these few minutes, started to go over the works, and would have gone over, but at this moment, discovering a fresh brigade of the enemy advancing in line of battle upon our left, I (a lieutenant-colonel, upon whom the command had devolved, so few were the men who had reached this spot) reluctantly gave the order to retire, and the command fell back in some confusion, but re-formed when clear of the flanking fire, and taking advantage of the accidents of ground checked

¹ *Post*, p. 231.

the advance of the enemy. The sun was so hot, and the men so exhausted from the long run as well as from the five days and nights of fighting and marching, that this retreat, though disorderly, was exceedingly slow, and we lost heavily in consequence from the enemy's fire. My own experience was that, while wishing very much to run, I could only limp along, using my sword as a cane. My color-bearer was shot by my side, and unheeding his appeal to save him, I could only pass his colors to the nearest man, and leave the brave fellow to die in a rebel prison. The flanking brigade of the enemy, which so nearly succeeded in surrounding us, was part of Longstreet's corps (now under command of General R. H. Anderson), and it was his line we had so nearly broken.¹ He had succeeded in outmarching us, and by delaying us some two hours by Stuart's dismounted cavalry and a skirmish line he had got possession of the crossing of the Brock Road with his line of march, which was by and near the Block House and Shady Grove Church road, and made good the Spottsylvania position. He had also been able to spare two brigades of Field's division to drive Wilson out of Spottsylvania Court House, which he had occupied for a short time with his cavalry, opposed only by Fitz-Hugh Lee's division of cavalry.² That Longstreet's corps had but just arrived at the time of our assault² is evident from the incomplete nature of the breast-works, and from the fact that they had no artillery in position. Had there been any support for the brigade which got up to the rebel works, the enemy's line would have been broken, and our army would have been between Lee's army and Richmond; but as we have seen, the only supporting brigade was far behind, and the rest of the 5th corps not yet up.

It is important here to notice the time of the arrival of Longstreet's troops at the crossing of the Brock Road with

¹ *Vide* Letter of Colonel C. S. Venable to Captain Robins, M. H. S. M., *post*, p. 233.

² *Vide* Letter of General R. H. Anderson, *post*, p. 230.

the Block House Road, in front of which they were met by Lyle's brigade. The old innkeeper at Spottsylvania Court House, Sanford by name, who remained in his house all through the battles around that place, preferring, however, the seclusion that the cellar gave (owing to the frequent ventilation of the upper stories by our shells), imparted to a brother officer¹ and myself in April, 1866, some important testimony on this point. He stated that he saw at about 8.30 A. M. of the 8th Longstreet's men advance from the woods on the left and rear of his house (this was Field's division) in line of battle, and passing beyond his house drive the Federal cavalry (Wilson's) out from Spottsylvania and back by the Fredericksburg Road.² They retired slowly, firing as they went with cannon and carbines. Sheridan states in his report that Wilson was driven out by Longstreet. At about this hour, then, half-past eight or a little earlier, Longstreet must have halted his men,³ sent two brigades to drive Wilson out of Spottsylvania Court House, and advancing two more half a mile or more up the Brock Road and up the road leading from the Block House to Alsop's, placed them in position across the Brock Road, where they immediately fell to intrenching and improving the slight cover already begun by the rebel cavalry. Our men, as we have seen, passed Todd's Tavern at 6 A. M., marched some distance, perhaps two miles, and then deployed, taking the place of our cavalry, who undoubtedly caused considerable delay, and began the forward movement. All this consumed two hours or more; and the advance in line of battle over more than two miles of rough country, skirmishing all the way, occupied at least two hours more, so that Longstreet had several hours, say three, to make cover for his men.

The delay in Robinson's movement caused by the cavalry

¹ Colonel Theodore Lyman.

² *Vide* Colonel Venable, *post*, p. 233.

³ S. H. S. vol. vii, pp. 491, 503. Diary of Colonel T. Lyman, *post*, p. 240.

was unfortunate, and gave rise to a good deal of feeling at the time. General Meade, who was always for giving the infantry a free foot, had sent orders to General Sheridan on the night of the 7th to have his cavalry out of the Brock Road, but Sheridan, not receiving them, obstructed the road with a brigade, and as the cavalry and infantry became unavoidably mixed up, this delayed the advance.

Sheridan claims in his report of these operations that had he had the opportunity to carry out the orders he had issued, which were for Wilson to go to Spottsylvania Court House, presumably by the Brock Road, and then into position at Snell's Bridge, Merritt to proceed to the same point via the Block House, and Gregg via Corbin's Bridge, he would have so delayed the march of the enemy as to have enabled our infantry to have reached Spottsylvania before them; but that these orders were superseded by those given by General Meade upon his arrival at Todd's Tavern, and consequently Merritt's brigade was ordered into the Brock Road in front of the infantry, and Gregg ordered to halt at Corbin's Bridge. General Meade, however, in his report merely says in regard to this that, as it was impossible to get the infantry up in season to support Wilson at Spottsylvania, he had to be withdrawn.

It is known that in an interview at this time General Meade was very indignant with General Sheridan,¹ until he learned from him personally that he had never received the orders to clear the road, when Meade frankly apologized for what must have been harsh censure. In this interview, which was described to me by a staff officer who was present,² General Sheridan, being much chagrined by the censure of his superior officer, stated that there was no force worth speaking of in front of the advance of the 5th corps; but he seems to have withdrawn this view, when in his cooler moments he came to write his report. Perhaps the feeling which caused Warren's unjustifiable removal from the command of the 5th corps at

¹ *Vide post*, p. 240.

² Colonel Theodore Lyman.

Five Forks began here. It is unfortunate that Sheridan, who seems to have had force enough to beat the enemy's cavalry, did not cross the Po at Corbin's Bridge and do what the enemy did to us, *i. e.* delay their march on Spottsylvania on the early morning of the 8th. He claims that General Meade's orders prevented this; but it is reasonable to suppose Meade's orders must have been misunderstood, as the whole object of the hurried march of Warren's corps was to reach first the Spottsylvania position.

The advanced troops fell back to the line which had been taken up by the 5th corps, intrenched, and waited for the 6th corps to come up, which they did in the afternoon, going into position on Warren's left. Crawford's division of the 5th corps made an attack in the afternoon, but with little result beyond capturing some seventy prisoners and losing considerably in killed and wounded.

The 2d corps were massed at Todd's Tavern to protect the rear, with Miles's brigade out towards the rebel line on the Catharpin Road, where he repulsed these attacks.

Burnside made the extreme left of our line. During the day all the corps were at different times engaged with the enemy. Our cavalry started on a raid towards Richmond, and we sent a train of 12,000 wounded to Fredericksburg.

Our lines were before night established in an east and west direction, nearly two miles from Spottsylvania, the whole army being clear of the Wilderness and concentrated around Spottsylvania Court House.

Orders were sent out to get the different corps ready for a movement by the enemy's right, but the men were so jaded and worn out that the orders were afterwards suspended and the army was to rest. The rebel army had been occupied as we were on this day (8th) in getting into position; Ewell's corps beginning to arrive at sunset, all getting up before morning, and Hill's corps (temporarily under command of Early) getting up during the morning of the 9th.

They had all been very busy, and their line on the 9th, extending from the Ny on their right to Glady Run on their left flank, occupied a commanding position, and was covered with strong earthworks and abatis, with approaches swept by infantry and artillery fire and rendered difficult by undergrowth.

Their troops were placed by divisions as follows: Kershaw on their left flank, then Field's division, both of Longstreet's corps; then Gordon's, Rodes's, and Johnson's divisions of Ewell's corps; then Wilcox's, Heth's, and Mahone's of Hill's corps.¹ Many of these troops arriving at night and immediately intrenching, the lines required correction by daylight, and thus was formed the "Salient," part of which we afterwards captured, but this part of the work was not completed until noon of the 10th.

The 9th was another hot and dusty day, and the 5th and 6th corps occupied it in pressing the enemy and developing his position, seeking points of assault.² The enemy were still passing down during the morning the Parker's Store Road, in dangerous proximity to our right and rear, and Hancock's 2d corps was at about 10 A. M. moved into position on Warren's right, making line of battle along the crest commanding the valley of the Po, the artillery shelling the rebel trains which were in sight, causing them to take a more sheltered road. Mott's division and Burton's heavy artillery were left to hold the Todd's Tavern position, and were afterwards moved to the left of the 6th corps.

Hancock examined the ground in his front at between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, with a view of crossing the stream, and afterwards directed Birney's, Barlow's, and Gibbon's divisions to force a passage. The stream was deep and the passage was rendered difficult by the thick undergrowth, but it was successfully carried in face of some resistance by the enemy. The troops were pushed forward toward the rebel

¹ *Post*, p. 234, Captain Venable.

² 67 W. R. 191.

left, building three bridges in their rear suitable for the passage of artillery, completing them on the morning of the 10th.

Burnside moved down the Fredericksburg and Spottsylvania Road,¹ crossed the Ny River, and pushed Potter's division close to the enemy's position and within a quarter of a mile of Spottsylvania Court House, Willcox's division having previously had a severe fight.

Thus we closed in upon the enemy and prepared for the general assault of the morrow. This day the army lost one of its chief commanders, Major-General Sedgwick, killed by sharpshooters and falling within our lines a sacrifice to his utter disregard of personal danger. The men of both armies were worn out with digging and marching. Every regimental change of position caused fresh protection to be thrown up (not less than five different breastworks were made this day by one of Robinson's brigades), and all welcomed the coming night and gratefully took the needed rest.

Meantime the North was roused to enthusiasm and joy by the following accurate (!) dispatch from the Secretary of War : —

“ Washington, May 9th. A bearer of dispatches from General Meade's headquarters has just reached here. He states that Lee's army commenced falling back on night of Friday, our army commenced pursuit on Saturday. The rebels were in full retreat for Richmond by the direct road. Hancock passed through Spottsylvania at daylight yesterday. Our headquarters at noon yesterday were 20 miles south of the battle-field.”

Tuesday, the 10th of May, is known as the first day of the battle of Spottsylvania. Our army occupied a crescent-shaped line along the northerly bank of the Po about six miles long with wings towards the enemy, a portion of the 2d corps being across the Po on our right flank. Our artillery were all up, and for the first time since we crossed the Rapidan were enabled

¹ 67 W. R. 908

to be in full play. The country in our front was on the left densely wooded, and elsewhere had many cleared spaces. The artillery fire was incessant all day, and our troops pushed the enemy at all points, trying to find some place where a successful assault could be made. Late in the afternoon it was decided to make the assault upon the enemy's position of Laurel Hill, a densely wooded crest covered by earthworks near Alsop's house, in front of Warren, and Hancock was directed to move two of his divisions to the left to participate in it and to assume command of the movement. Gibbon's division was crossed to the north bank of the Po and formed on Warren's right;¹ Birney followed and was massed in Warren's rear as reserve, leaving Barlow to hold the ground on the south side of the Po. Birney was sharply attacked in crossing, and Barlow was so pushed by Heth's whole division that, without bringing on a general engagement, the ground could not be held. Therefore all the troops were brought back across the Po, Miles's brigade being the last to cross. We lost heavily in killed and wounded in this affair, many of the wounded perishing in the flames of the burning forest, which had taken fire during the action. Two guns of Arnold's battery were lost here. The horses, terrified by the fire, dragged the pieces into the woods, and so jammed them between the trees that they had to be abandoned.

Birney was then ordered to Warren's right, and Barlow to the right of Birney.

At 5 P. M. after a heavy artillery fire, Warren, supported by Gibbon, attacked at Laurel Hill, but was repulsed and fell back in some confusion. At 6.30 P. M. another assault of the 5th corps, with Gibbon's and Birney's divisions of the 2d corps, was made under the personal command of General Hancock with the same result; and meeting with heavy loss (General Rice of Cutler's division was killed here), this attempt to turn the enemy's left was given up.

¹ 67 W. R. 331.

The ground in front of the Laurel Hill position was swept by the enemy's artillery, and our men suffered severely from it. In my own regiment (39th Massachusetts Infantry) we lost several men killed by the falling limbs of the huge pine-trees cut off by the enemy's artillery fire. One of our men was pinned to the ground by one of these limbs, so near to the enemy's line that, when we retreated, as we did upon receiving a terrific musketry fire at point-blank range, he was the only one who saw that after the volley the enemy ran as fast as we did, but in the opposite direction. They soon returned, however, and captured the observer.

At some points our troops even entered the breastworks, but the men though brave were easily discouraged, and the long continued strain and fatigue told upon their spirit; and while they would defend their position to the last or retire in the face of heavy odds (as Barlow's men did) with the utmost coolness, the fact remains that the men of the 2d and 5th corps were not as ambitious on the 10th as they had been on the 6th or the 8th days of May.

General Lee telegraphed to Richmond in regard to these events:¹ "May 10. Frequent skirmishes occurred yesterday and to-day, each army endeavoring to discover the position of the other. To-day the enemy shelled our lines and made several assaults with infantry against different points, particularly on our left held by General Robert Anderson. The last, which occurred after sunset, was the most obstinate, some of the enemy leaping over the breastworks. They were easily repulsed."

Birney's men in these assaults were not as steady as they might have been. Hancock reports² Ward's brigade of Birney's division as retiring in disorder. Birney's division was formerly a division in the 3d corps, and was somewhat demoralized by the breaking up of that organization, though they had previously borne the best of records. The feeling

¹ 68 W. R. 982.

² 67 W. R. 334.

ran so high that at a review after the reorganization some of the men wore the 3d corps badge on their caps, and pinned the 2d corps badge upon the tails of their blouses.

The 6th corps had not suffered as much, or worked as hard, in the preceding days as the 2d and 5th, and when at about the same time General Emory Upton, commanding the 2d brigade of the 1st division of this corps, made a diversion on the enemy's right centre, he met with more success.¹

The attack was made at an angle of the enemy's works about half a mile to the left of the Spottsylvania Road, upon formidable intrenchments, with abatis in front, surmounted by heavy logs, underneath which were loopholes for musketry. A battery was in position at the angle, and at about 100 yards to the rear was another line of works, which were partly completed and were occupied by a second line of battle. The enemy's troops at this point were Rodes's and Johnston's divisions of Ewell's corps.

The position was in an open field about 200 yards from a pine wood, through which a wood road led from our lines direct to the enemy's works.

The column of attack was composed of twelve regiments, formed in four lines of battle — four regiments on the right of this wood road, and eight regiments on the left. The men were brought into position in silence, with the pieces of the first line loaded and capped, and those of the other lines loaded but not capped. Bayonets were fixed. The instructions were precise, and provided for every emergency. The first line was instructed as soon as the works were carried to turn to the right and charge the battery; the second line was to halt at the works and open fire if necessary to the front; the third line was to lie down behind the second; and the fourth was to halt at the edge of the woods as reserve.

The command moved forward noiselessly to the edge of the wood, and then with a wild cheer rushed for the works, gaining

¹ 67 W. R. 665, and 80 W. R. 492.

the parapet under a terrible front and flank fire. The rebels at first refused to move, but sat upright in their pits with bayonets held ready to impale the first who should leap over the works. A hand-to-hand fight ensued. Our men held their pieces at arm's length and fired downward, or hurled their pieces upon the enemy, pinning them to the ground. Pat O'Connell, 96th Pennsylvania, was pinned to the parapet, but was rescued by his comrades. The struggle lasted but a few seconds, and our men swept over the works, expanding to the right and left, overran the battery and the second line of works, and made an opening in the enemy's line of half a mile in width, ready for the supporting force which ought to have come up on the left, but which did not arrive. The enemy made repeated attempts to retake the works, but without success; and Upton's brave men reluctantly obeyed the order to give up their prize and retire, when such an order became imperative because of the lateness of the hour and the evident failure of the support.

We lost about 1000 in killed, wounded, and missing, but took nearly 1200 prisoners and several stands of colors. Mott's division of the 2d corps was to have supported this movement, but they were nearly a mile from the point of attack, and General Upton, being ordered to attack without delay, had no opportunity to make arrangements with them. General Upton attributes the unfruitfulness of the charge to the difficulty of combining the operations of two corps. Thus the opportunity to capture and hold the whole left of the rebel position was lost. We, however, gained some valuable information about the enemy's position, which was of service when on the 12th we again assaulted near this spot and took the Salient.

Burnside's corps had no severe fighting on this day. He had moved up towards Mott's left from the Fredericksburg Road, and Mott had succeeded in forming a connection with him. But on this day Burnside lost one of his best officers killed,

"the distinguished General Stevenson," as General Meade called him.¹

The attacks on Lee's left being unsuccessful, it was determined to attack his right centre, where we had discovered a salient, and the 11th of May was occupied in making preparations for this.

Wright was ordered to extend the lines of the 6th corps,² and Warren to extend the 5th corps to the right, taking the place of the 2d corps, who were so well covered by breastworks as to admit of their being wholly released. Hancock with the 2d corps was ordered to our left to support the attack in rear of 6th corps. Some of our artillery was moved from right to left. Burnside was ordered to assist in the assault on the extreme left.

The 5th corps made an assault to keep the enemy in his lines, and the closeness of the armies caused desultory fighting along the lines. Mott's division was sent to the rear. Burnside's men were withdrawn across the Ny, but afterwards returned to their old position. Reinforcements came up from the rear, and our men were further encouraged by the reports from Sheridan, who had met with some success near Yellow Tavern. For the first time since crossing the Rapidan rain fell, and although converting the dust into very troublesome mud, it was most refreshing.

We had lost from May 5 to 12, 29,400 men in killed, wounded, and missing,³ and had captured 7078 men and 22 guns,⁴ having lost two guns.

The two armies were now facing each other, both strongly fortified, and were waiting for the next deadly struggle which was to come on the following day.

General Grant was evidently making good his expressed determination to hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy until by mere attrition, if in no other way, there should be nothing left for him but equal submission with the

¹ 67 W. R. 191.

² Ibid. 192.

³ Ibid. 195.

⁴ Ibid. 196.

loyal section of our common country to the Constitution and the laws of the land, and he telegraphed his views of the situation as follows:¹ "May 11th. We have ended the sixth day of very heavy fighting. The result to this time is much in our favor. But our losses have been heavy, as well as those of the enemy. We have lost to this time 11 general officers, killed, wounded, and missing, and probably 20,000 men. I think the loss of the enemy must be greater, we having taken over 4000 prisoners in battle, while he has taken but few except stragglers. I propose to fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer." While General Lee announces a few days later that a series of successes have, by favor of God, been achieved by his army, and informs that army that it is in their power, under God, to defeat the last grand effort of the enemy and establish the independence of their native land, earning the lasting love and gratitude of their countrymen and the admiration of mankind.

Letter of Major-General Richard H. Anderson, C. S. A.,
Commanding Division A. P. Hill's Corps, Army of N. V.,
afterwards Commanding Longstreet's Corps.

BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA,
May 14, 1879.

Captain Edward B. Robins, Secretary Military Historical
Society of Mass., Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir: After an absence of some days I found your letter of the 2d inst. awaiting my return. I regret to say that I have so few papers and so treacherous a memory that I cannot give all the information which you ask for; but I will endeavor to comply with your request as fully as I can, consistently with accuracy.

You first inquire about the force which you met at Laurel

¹ 68 W. R. 627.

Hill, near the junction of the Todd's Tavern and Block House roads ; and subsequently you ask to be informed of the order in which the brigades of my division and the other divisions came into the Battle of the Wilderness. In the narrative which I give you the order of these events is reversed.

When Lee's army moved from its positions at, and in the vicinity of, Orange Court House about the 1st of May, 1864, my division was left to observe the march of the United States forces down the Rapidan, and to oppose any attempt on their part to cross the river in the rear of Lee. As soon as I felt assured that no such attempt would be made, my division was to rejoin without delay A. P. Hill's corps, to which it belonged.

On the 5th of May, being satisfied that the whole U. S. forces had passed down the Rapidan, the brigades of my division were withdrawn from points at which they had been posted along the river and directed to rendezvous at Verdier-ville. At 2 o'clock A. M., on the 6th, the division was put in march on the Plank Road, and reached the vicinity of the battle-field at a little after sunrise, and halted for about an hour to wait the passage of the rear of Longstreet's corps, which was filing into the road. Closing upon this corps, we arrived shortly afterwards at the scene of action.

My division was not engaged as a whole body. It had no sooner arrived than orders were received to send one brigade to reinforce Longstreet on the right of the Plank Road, and another to report to A. P. Hill on the left of the same road, to move up two other brigades in line of battle at a right angle with the road, the right resting on the road, and to attack. The brigades had come up in the following order : Mahone's, Wright's, Perrin's, Perry's, and Harris's. Mahone was sent to Longstreet ; Wright to Hill ; Perrin and Perry moved to attack as directed ; and Harris was held in reserve.

The attacking brigades were soon engaged, and gained some ground slowly until about midday, when there was a lull for

some hours, both parties seeming disposed to be cautious on account of the extent and density of the forest.

At 3 o'clock P. M. a strong force [Union] was advanced against Perry's brigade, and it [Perry's brigade] was driven back some distance, until Harris came up and checked the advance. There was only some skirmishing and desultory firing after this. Night was approaching. Wright's brigade had returned and was held in reserve on the Plank Road, Mahone still with Longstreet. On the 7th no movement was made by the division up to the time when I was assigned to the command of Longstreet's corps, a little after midday, if I remember correctly. You perceive from the narrative that my division was the last to come upon the field. I am unable to give you the order of arrival or the position of the other divisions.

Longstreet was severely wounded about midday on the 6th, and soon afterwards General Lee placed me in command of his corps and directed me to retire the troops quietly, and as soon after nightfall as practicable; and when I should have reached a suitable place in rear of the line they had been occupying, to let them have rest, but to forbid fires or any noise that might give intelligence of the withdrawal; and punctually at 3 A. M. to be in march for Spottsylvania Court House by a road which a guide would show me.

Upon withdrawing the corps from its place in line of battle (which I have previously stated was on the right of the Plank Road), I found the woods on fire and burning furiously in every direction, and there was no suitable place for a rest. The road by which I was conducted was narrow and frequently obstructed, so that at best the progress of the troops was slow, and the guide having informed me that it preserved the same character until near Spottsylvania Court House, I decided to continue the march until I should be within easy reach of that place. At a little after daylight, about three miles from the Court House, I found some open

fields, and halted there to let the troops close up and rest a little. The orders to this effect had scarcely been given, when a courier from Fitz-Hugh Lee arrived with an urgent call from him to any troops that might be met to come to his support with all speed, for his cavalry was hard pressed and could not hold the place much longer. Field's¹ division, which was leading and which by this time was pretty well closed up, resumed the march immediately at double-quick. Before the head of his column could reach the Court House, a scout gave me information of the approach of a large body of U. S. infantry from my left, and sending Kershaw's brigade to the support of Fitz Lee, I turned all the rest of Field's division off to meet the approach from the left. Kershaw arrived in time to recover the Court House from which Fitz Lee had been compelled to retire, and, as fast as the other troops of Longstreet's corps came up, they were pushed rapidly to the support of Field's division, and they maintained their position until Lee arrived with the main body of his army.

If I remember rightly, it was Humphreys's Mississippi brigade² which first encountered, and checked the approach of the U. S. infantry on the Todd's Tavern Road.

I have never taken the pains to learn accurately by what roads Longstreet's corps was conducted from the Wilderness to the Court House; I think they were wood roads and plantation roads, and I doubt whether they are laid down on any maps. The march of the other corps — their times of arrival and their positions — I am sorry to say I cannot give you with accuracy, and I had therefore better be silent. Fitz-Hugh Lee, who commanded a division in Stuart's cavalry, can doubtless give you valuable information.

Yours very respectfully,

R. H. ANDERSON.

¹ Apparently this should be "Kershaw's." See 67 W. R. 1021, 1056, post p. 231. — Ed.

² Brigadier-General Benjamin G. Humphreys, C. S. A. — Ed.

Letter of Brigadier-General Joseph B. Kershaw, Command-
ing 3d Div. 1st A. C., C. S. A.

CAMDEN, So. Car- Oct. 7, 1866.

Dear Sir: Your favor of last month has been awaiting a reply so long that I can hold it no longer unanswered, though my information on the point of your inquiry is very limited. I had two brigades at the place mentioned (early morning May 8, 1864), my own and Humphreys's Miss. brigade. The latter was on the right and must have encountered your left (Lyle's brigade). The regiments composing the latter brigade were all from Miss. and I am sorry to say I cannot now give you their numbers. The 18th was one. It (Humphreys's Miss. brigade) advanced so far that it was cut off by the advance of your people and *we thought captured*. It came up, however, at night, having made a wide detour. I do not remember where the hospital (Federal prisoners) was exactly. My impression is that it was immediately in rear of the famous angle which was the scene of so great a conflict and slaughter afterwards.

Eureka! I have found the roster I was wanting. The 13th -17th-18th & 2^d regiments constituted the Miss. brigade.

We moved the night of the 7th. Early in the morning we came to a point in rear of the position where the first infantry fight occurred. Then Gen. Stuart asked for support and I was told to send him two (2) brigades, which I did, as mentioned. I was ordered to take possession of the Court House (Spottsylvania) with the other *two brigades, which I did*. I do not know whether we moved by the Block House. We knew that your people were moving to our right. I saw and suspected that.

We moved just at dark to our right and so continued by road parallel to your line of march. We marched all night.

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Yours truly,

J. B. KERSHAW.

Letter of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Scott Venable, A. D. C.
to General R. E. Lee, C. S. A.

CHARLOTTESVILLE, April 25, 1879.

Captain E. B. Robins, Secretary.

Dear Sir: General Lee moved down from Orange Court House with Ewell's corps (consisting of Rodes's, Early's, and Johnson's divisions) and with two divisions of Hill's corps (viz.: Heth's and Wilcox's), sending instructions to Longstreet, who was near Gordonsville with his *two* divisions (Field's and Kershaw's), to move up after him, and leaving Anderson's division of Hill's corps to hold the Rapidan Heights for a while and then to move on.

Near the Wilderness Ewell marched along the old Rock Turnpike, Lee, with Hill's corps (Heth's division in front), moved on the Plank Road, — and our cavalry moved down the Catharpin Road on our right. On the afternoon of May 5th Ewell's corps became engaged on the old Turnpike, — first Johnson, then Rodes, and then Early, I think. The head of the column on the Plank Road, Heth's division, became engaged about the same time, and Wilcox's division was sent in to his support as it came up. These two divisions held at nightfall a position on the Plank Road extending considerably to its right and a very short distance to its left. I cannot give you the order of brigades, except that Wilcox's division was on the right.

On the morning of the 6th of May when Longstreet arrived, just as the Federal attack was pressing Wilcox's division back on the right of the Plank Road, Wilcox's and Heth's divisions were withdrawn (except one of Heth's brigades, viz.: Davis's Mississippi brigade, commanded by Col. Stone), Longstreet's troops taking their place on the right and left of the Plank Road (Kershaw's division on the right and Field's division on the left), the two divisions of Hill, withdrawn, were put in position to the rear of Longstreet's left — in echelon in a manner. Anderson's division of Hill's corps,

left at Orange Court House, arrived on the field some little time after Longstreet (about 9 or 10 o'clock, I think) and was put in with Longstreet's troops. Longstreet's flank attack on the Federal left, made just before he was wounded, was made by *three brigades* under *Mahone* of *Anderson's division*.

On the morning of the 6th the dispositions on the old Turnpike Road of Ewell's corps were as follows: Rodes's division on the right of the Turnpike, Johnson's division on the left, and Early's division on the left of Johnson.

Between *Hill's* left, near the Plank Road, and Rodes's right, near the old Turnpike Road, there was a very wide, unoccupied gap — which I would put down at a mile or mile and a half from riding rapidly over it.

In the march to Spottsylvania Court House, Longstreet's two divisions (under Anderson, who was now promoted from his division to its command) marched first. The troops marched on the roads in rear of our position at Wilderness — which I could not recall without a map. When Anderson reached the junction of the Block House Road and the Spottsylvania Court House Road, Stuart, who was in your front up that road, sent to him for assistance. Anderson sent him three brigades of Kershaw's division, and ultimately strengthened the right of these with other troops. The Federal cavalry occupied Spottsylvania Court House, having Fitz Lee with his division of cavalry in their front — with some brigades of Field's division. Anderson took the position of Fitz Lee's cavalry, who were withdrawn. The Federal cavalry soon left the Court House, and Field's division was put on Kershaw's right. General Lee arrived later at the head of Rodes's division, who was the head of Ewell's march — and then came later Johnson's division, and Early's under Gordon (Early having been put at the head of Hill's corps owing to a severe attack of illness which disabled the latter). And then came Hill's corps — (Heth's, Wilcox's, and Mahone's (Anderson's old) divisions). Then the line taken up

at Spottsylvania was by divisions as follows: Kershaw's division on our left, next Field's division, next Gordon's division, next Rodes's division, next Johnson's, next Wilcox's, next Heth's, and next Mahone's. I have put Gordon's division between Rodes and Field, but I think his division was mainly in reserve, and Rodes had a brigade in reserve. Mahone on the 12th of May was not in trenches, but on the extreme right near the Church where our line bent back on the road.

I see I have not answered quite definitely enough your questions about the troops on the Block House Road. You first met Stuart, and to him Anderson sent the three brigades mentioned, so Stuart really commanded in that encounter. I cannot give without reference the exact time of Anderson's setting out from the Wilderness. I think he moved a part of the way on the night of the 7th. I have given the above from memory entirely, with the exception of reference to my friend, Major Green Peyton, General Rodes's adjutant-general, as to the positions of the troops on the Turnpike Road. But I think it is accurate as the subject is fresh with me from a recent re-writing of an address for publication on the Campaign of '64, made in 1873.

Yours very truly,

CHARLES S. VENABLE.

Extract from Diary of Colonel Theodore Lyman, A. D. C. to General G. G. Meade, giving an account of a visit to the Wilderness battle-field in April, 1866, by General Peirson and himself.

April 13, 1866. Not long after we began to see traces of the rebel rear in the Wilderness fight,—scraps of rubber blanket, old cartridge boxes, etc., and presently an indication of the site of a hospital, with the grave of an Union officer, who had died three weeks after the action in the hands of the enemy,—a sad fate! Then came their short second line, and

then their first line, just on the edge of a clearing in the thick wood. To the opposite side of this clearing Peirson's brigade was brought on the double-quick, and stopped the enemy's advance when Griffin was forced back May 5. On the opposite slope two guns were abandoned, and attempts were made to get them off without success. Peirson's brigade (under Leonard of 13th Massachusetts) . . . attempted a charge across the open, but was met by a storm of canister at a range of some 350 yards. Upton (who joined on his right, being the left of the 6th corps) refused to budge, saying it was madness. . . .

Once more we made a diagonal walk through the wood, which brought us out on the Brock Road in a few hundred yards. Well do I recollect that road on those two days! and the musketry, now receding, now approaching, and the streams of wounded! We kept down this road and fed our horses at Stevens's house, which marks the extreme left of our line. An old man (the uncle) was there, and the woman of the house, and a couple of daughters, apparently; also a rustic lover (?) and a poodle. Thence we made the best of our way towards Todd's Tavern, which I did not fail instantly to recognize, and was content to get a drink from the old well, which before our cavalry had pretty much drunk dry. Thence to open country, above and below Alsopp's, proved farther than my recollection gave, being really three miles; and from that point to the rebel works, where the road turns sharp to the left towards Spottsylvania Court House, one and one quarter miles. In this opening, not far from Alsopp's, I saw Sedgwick, Warren, etc., the day of the 8th, after Robinson had been driven back and wounded. Going now down the road past Alsopp's, we turned to the right in the hollow, and kept over the oak knoll where Grant and Meade stood among the skirmish bullets, and saw nothing. Just beyond, at the edge of the oak timber, was a battery in a very hot position, where Martin was hit and near which General Sedgwick was killed;

and no wonder, for the woods to the front and left were full of sharpshooters, the most of them not over 600 yards off. We took a preliminary view of this neighborhood, where Peirson's brigade first came, the advance of the army moving from the Wilderness, and promised ourselves a more complete view the next day; for the evening was coming on and so was a heavy thunder-storm. So we crossed the rebel works and galloped for it, reaching the tavern at Spottsylvania Court House, just before the hail, wind, and rain broke heavily over the house. The tavern is a big, square building, and mine host (Sanford) is a big man, who possesses much language and politeness, and not much else, so far as concerns eating and sleeping.

We took straight up the Fredericksburg Road, which is just opposite the tavern, to begin our view of the field. We used to call this the "Gate" road, because of a gate put down on the U. S. map, which Burnside was ordered to halt at when he moved down, and which he naturally could not distinguish any more than one could distinguish a pair of bars. The court house is a brick building of substantial make and surrounded by a low brick wall, which, with the court house itself, was much knocked by the cannonading. The rebel line, which is a simple one, crosses the road about 200 yards from the court house. Thence to our front line is from 700 to 800 yards. Our works are much more complex, as they come in by successive approaches from the crest above the Ny to this point. On our right (east) could be seen the battery in a hollow, whence we saw the court house when General Meade rode along the lines held by the 6th corps (May 20). Keeping straight on we went as far as the river (or "creek," as they call it here), whence could be seen the familiar Gayle house opposite, and the Beverly house, where Warren's headquarters were. The Myers farm, whence Upton's brigade was driven, and which Ayres's people retook, is sold now to a Minnesota family. Hence we sought our front line again, working to our right

as we walked. We took note of some Massachusetts graves on the way. This direction brought us soon to a point opposite the east base of the great rebel Salient, and where the hostile works are separated only by a pine-wood a couple of hundred yards wide. A cluster of graves marked, as usual, the dangers of this spot. Crossing the belt of pines diagonally by a little run, we came on the east extremity of the final line which the enemy drew across the base of the Salient Angle, when it was captured on the 12th of May. This was a curiosity of field fortification! Warned by the dreadful loss and carnage of that day, exposed to an artillery enfilade from both flanks, and fearful of a repetition of the terrible assault, the garrison worked with the energy of perseverance, almost of despair! The high parapet was not only traversed as often as every ten or twelve feet, but was inclosed on the rear, so that the line was divided into a series of square pens, with banks of earth heavily riveted with oak logs. From space to space was what looked like a wooden camp chimney, but in truth was an elevated post for sharpshooters with a little loop-hole in front. I never saw any like them. We walked along the parapet till we got opposite the Harrison house (now occupied by a stone-deaf Rhode Islander, one Peabody), when we struck across to our right, to the first or advanced cross-line to which the rebels retired; and there, turning again to the right, we followed it back till we got to the east face of the great Salient, at the point where our left rested after the capture of the works. But before arriving there, and quite within this advanced rebel cross-line, we came on the graves of two privates and a sergeant, known only as belonging to "Corcoran's Irish Legion," brave Irishmen who had fallen far in advance of the main line of battle. This "Legion" had come down from below Alexandria as a reinforcement, and was attached, I think, to the 2d corps. McMahon's brother, killed afterwards at Cold Harbor, commanded a zouave regiment in it. We followed the Salient northward towards its

apex, and traced the way in which our men had turned the works. There was open country all about this part of the works; and the scattered graves marked where men had fallen as they advanced from the edge of the wood to the assault. At the very apex (which is obtuse), we had a good view over the country, and I saw the Landron house, only 600 yards off, where Hancock had his headquarters; and to the left and a little to the rear, the hollow where Wright was, and where the missiles of all kinds were so plenty. The point termed "Death Angle" is still more to the left, where the west face of the Salient begins to slope and where the captured portion is connected with the prolongation of our line. . . .

We turned from here, crossed a field strown with the sabots of a rebel 12-pounder battery, and passed through a wood of small pines all scarred by rifle-balls. This brought us out in the clearing east of the road from Alsopp's and Todd's Tavern, where, as I understand it, Upton made his fine charge on the 10th.¹ This road is, of course, where we crossed the rebel line yesterday eve to go to the court house. Asked Peirson about the attempt to drive the enemy from this crossing, because it has an important bearing on the subsequent actions round Spottsylvania. Somewhere about the edge of the Hart farm, say two miles by the road from the present rebel works on this road, the infantry deployed, having come upon some of our cavalry who had been engaged, but were then lying in the edge of the woods. Advancing, they began skirmishing with a force of rebel cavalry supported by two guns, and drove them down the road, nearly capturing the pieces. This deployment and the skirmish through the woods and the succeeding open occupied as usual much time. Following the road after its turn to the right over the wooded knoll, they came to a halt at the further edge of the wood, for

¹ Or rather it must have been at the northwest face of the Salient where we saw the sabots in the field. See General Upton's letter in M. H. S. unpublished reports, vol. i, p. 271. — Ed.

there was the enemy's infantry in line, with a breastwork and a rude abatis (how heavy the work was Peirson is not sure; probably a hasty rifle-pit at that moment). The exhausted men lay down panting; since the evening of the 4th they had been marching, fighting, and digging with small intermission, and now they were further exhausted by a running engagement of two miles. It was the morning of the 8th. Robinson rode up and said: "We *must* drive them from there, or they will get a battery in position" (the advanced battery directly on the road had not then been put up). A charge was made over 500 yards of open, Peirson's brigade on the left of the road, the Maryland brigade on the right. Where Baxter's was he is not sure. The Marylanders received a severe musketry, lost a number of men, and fell back in confusion. His brigade, somewhat covered by the ground, advanced to within 75 yards of the works and stopped under protection of a steep crest. There they lay, firing if a rebel raised to shoot. Looking to left, Peirson now saw two lines of the enemy, a good brigade front, marching out of the woods in excellent order upon his flank, and even rear. He gave orders to his color-bearer to take the flag and fall back, and the whole brigade ran for it, followed by a shower of bullets. It was his wish to keep up with his men so as to stop them when they got in the edge of the wood, but he was so totally exhausted that he could only hobble back at a walk, helping himself with his sword. One of his color-bearers was killed, the other wounded, but both flags were saved. He himself had several ball-holes in his clothes and three buckshot in his left arm. At the edge of the wood he had a sunstroke, and was carried off by one of his men. It was in rallying these troops that Robinson lost his leg by a musket-shot. Now it is clear that when our advance arrived at the junction of the roads by which the enemy and we advanced on the court house, the enemy were already in position with a line of battle, some sort of protection, and, moreover, a spare brigade to use

for flanking. That they too were newly arrived is plain, because their artillery was not up. These were Longstreet's¹ people; and old Sanford testified that part of his troops advanced on the court house about 8.30 A. M. of that morning, and drove away Wilson's cavalry, who retired slowly by the Fredericksburg Road, firing with cannon and carbines as they went. These rebel troops came, not by the main road from the northwest, but across the fields from the west. Longstreet,¹ then, seems to have halted his first division at the junction of the roads, to stop our infantry, and to have sent the second by a back road past A. Perry's to drive Wilson from the court house. Knowing that at about 6 A. M. of that morning two divisions of the 5th corps had got past Todd's Tavern, I should infer (from all these data) that Longstreet¹ arrived at the vital point — the junction of the roads — about 8 A. M., that Robinson attacked about 8.30 A. M., and that he occupied about two and a half hours in skirmishing over two miles of country, a consumption of time readily understood by those who have seen skirmishing. Measured from the Plank Road, Longstreet¹ had to march ten miles, Robinson eight; but it seems probable that Longstreet's¹ starting-point was south of the Plank, Robinson's, north, which would make the distance nearly even. The delay made by the opposition of the rebel cavalry, supported by the two guns, was fatal to our tactics. How much delay was caused by our own cavalry column getting in the road I do not know, but Meade had a hot interview with Sheridan about it, and Sheridan's assertion that there was nothing worth speaking of to stop the advance of our infantry was plainly an entire mistake; and very likely the remark was in part dictated by temper.

A few hundred yards to the right of where this attack was made, we visited the patch of pine-woods, where on the 10th Peirson's brigade again advanced to attack. This was the day General Rice was killed. The brigade advanced to within about one hundred yards of the works, and then began firing

¹ Anderson. — Ed.

in the thick woods, being exposed to a tremendous artillery enfilade, whose marks still remained in the fallen timber. Peirson said he ordered his men to cease firing, finding few balls coming the other way, but got an order from the brigade commander to open again. "It always seemed to me a feeble attack," said he. The pines on *our* side were all shot up, but on the side facing the rebels there was not one tenth of the bullet marks. This may have been meant only as a demonstration, but, as I recollect the orders, Warren, and Gibbon on his right, were to *attack*. It is but human nature to think there was but too much of this demonstrative firing to excuse a real attack. Then Peirson was knocked senseless by a shell, and as he came to himself, saw General Rice getting over the breastworks. We examined the graves hereabout, of which there are many in the hollow to the rear. After crossing to the rebel line and going as far to our right as the J. Perry house, we faced about and made the best of our way to the tavern. At supper was a bright doctor, ex-surgeon of a Georgia brigade, and a dweller near to the spot where Robinson was wounded — his name Durrett (immortalized as "Dirt" on the map!).

IX

CAPTURE OF THE SALIENT MAY 12 1864

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL FRANCIS CHANNING BARLOW
U. S. V.

Read before the Society January 13, 1879

CAPTURE OF THE SALIENT MAY 12 1864

THE following account of the attack on the rebel lines at Spottsylvania on the 12th of May, 1864, will be a meagre and unsatisfactory one. Fourteen and a half years have passed since that day, and many of the incidents and events which were noticed and known at the time have been forgotten.

I have no memoranda of the operations of that campaign, nor have I ever made any official report of them, so far as I remember, and I have been ever since greatly occupied with other matters, which have pretty nearly banished those occurrences from my memory.

I shall tell only those details which I positively remember, except that I shall allude to some particulars which have been told me by others who were present. I relate what I remember, not as being a complete history of these occurrences, but as an imperfect contribution which may hereafter help to throw light upon them.

I understand that the purpose of this Society is not to obtain striking and picturesque accounts of military operations, but to gather together facts, carefully and accurately stated, which may assist the future historian.

At about 7 P. M. of May 11 the commanders of three of the divisions of the 2d army corps were summoned to corps headquarters by General Hancock, its commander. They were General Barlow of the 1st division, General Gibbon of the 2d, and General Birney of the 3d. The 4th division (General Mott's) had been for a day or two on detached service at the extreme left of our line, and its commander was not present. On arriving at corps headquarters we were

told by General Hancock that an attack upon the enemy's right flank by the 2d corps was intended to be made at daylight on the next day. We were told that it was a movement of more than usual importance, and were reminded of the gratitude which the country would feel for those officers who should contribute to the success of the enterprise.

No information whatever, so far as I can remember, was given us as to the position or strength of the enemy, or as to the troops to be engaged in the movement (except that the 2d corps was to take part in it), or as to the plan of the attack, or why any attack was to be made at that time or place. The sole information and the only orders given were that the leading division was to report at corps headquarters at an hour named of that night (which I think was ten o'clock), and that the others were to follow closely. At the headquarters we were to meet staff and engineer officers, who would conduct us to the ground, and give us all the information needed.

The 1st division had the advance, and we were at the appointed place at the appointed hour. There we were joined (at the head of the column) by Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. Morgan, inspector-general of the 2d corps (a most active and competent officer), and an engineer officer from army headquarters. My own recollection for many years was that the latter officer was Captain Paine, but I have been lately told, upon authority which seems to be conclusive, that it was Major Mendell of the U. S. Engineers.¹ While writing this I learn from General Hancock's official report that this is the fact.

The night was very rainy and dark, and the roads were very muddy and heavy, and we began a laborious and tiresome march under the guidance of the officers above mentioned.

I remember well the loudly expressed indignation of those

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Mendell.

officers at being sent to conduct an important movement when they had no information whatever as to the position or strength of the enemy, or indeed upon any of the important points, and at times a sense of the ludicrous, of the absurdity of the situation, prevailed over the feeling of responsibility and indignation. As my time of responsibility had not yet come, I could give way freely to the ludicrousness of the scene, and the others could not resist it. As we staggered and stumbled along in the mud and intense darkness, and I vainly sought for information, the absurdity of our position — that we were proceeding to attack the enemy when no one even knew his direction, and we could hardly keep on our own legs — appealed to me very strongly as I listened to the conversation of Colonel Morgan (who was what might be called a profane swearer) and his criticisms on the “conduct of the war.”

It was an exquisitely ludicrous scene, and I could hardly sit on my horse for laughter. I remember that I finally said to Colonel Morgan, “For Heaven’s sake, at least, face us in the right direction, so that we shall not march away from the enemy, and have to go round the world and come up in their rear.”

Colonel Miles and Colonel Brooke, commanding two of the brigades of the division, rode with me at the head of the column, and were loud in their complaints of the madness of the undertaking. The former was so emphatic in his indignation that I was at last compelled to interfere, and tell him to be quiet.

I do not think these details as to our march are trifling, because they throw some light on the general methods of conducting important operations.

After a march of about two hours, we reached a point which we were told was to be our position and the base of our attack. It must have been about twelve or half-past twelve in the morning. It was an intensely dark night, and

nothing whatever could be seen of the surrounding country. I have not exaggerated the ignorance of the officers who were sent to conduct us. I have since laughed with Colonel Morgan as to his utter ignorance of the whole situation. It is necessary that this should be borne in mind in order that the purely haphazard character of this apparently brilliant attack may be known.

When this mass of darkness, mud, and rain was pointed out at midnight as the position from which the attack was to be made, the functions and responsibility of the staff officers ceased, and those of the commanders of the troops began. Morgan and Mendell could do little more than indicate in a general way the direction in which the enemy lay, and inform us that we were about at the point at which their line of works was thrown back for the purpose of protecting their flank. That is to say, we were about on the right flank of the enemy. As to how far distant their works were, the character of the works, and their construction, the nature of the intervening ground, and the force opposed to us, their artillery, etc., these officers frankly confessed their ignorance. And as to our own forces we had no other information than that three divisions of our corps were to join in an attack, and that we were on the flank of our own army with nothing beyond.

On the very ground on which we were was the 4th division of our corps (Mott's), which had been sent out there a day or two before, and composed the left, or advance (for we moved always by the left on that campaign) of our army. This division, we were told, had made an unsuccessful attack on the preceding afternoon. As the commanding officer of the leading division, I was now compelled to obtain such information as could be had, in order to make the necessary dispositions. It must have been half-past twelve, and it would be daylight soon after four.

The troops were ordered to rest on their arms, and I sought for information at the headquarters of General Mott, near by,

which were at the "Brown House." His division had made an unsuccessful attack the day before, and had approached more or less near the enemy's works. I must have seen General Mott that night, but I cannot recall the fact, nor do I remember having any conversation with any of his officers, except with Lieutenant-Colonel Merriam of the 16th Massachusetts regiment.

This officer (who was killed the next day) had been engaged with his regiment in the former attack, and had advanced far enough to obtain some kind of an impression as to the enemy's works and the intervening ground. He drew upon the wall a sketch of the position, and this was the sole basis on which the dispositions of my division were made. The intervening ground was open and comparatively free from trees and other obstructions, and from the information which he gave, we were able to form in such a position that a direct march forward brought us nearly upon the angle formed by the refusal of the enemy's line.

The division was formed in column of regiments, each doubled on the centre. In the first line were the 1st and 4th brigades (Colonels Miles and Brooke), and in the second the 2d and 3d brigades. The former, the Irish brigade, was commanded by Colonel Smythe, and the latter by some colonel whose name I do not remember. Between the first and second lines, and between the brigades in each line, some small space was intended to be left, but this disappeared as soon as we got into motion, and the division became a solid mass.

On the left of the column, at some considerable distance, I placed a body of troops (whether more than one regiment I do not remember), marching by the right flank so that they might, if necessary, come to the front and face to our left, thus protecting the exposed (left) flank of the column. Of course, in the darkness, and on the rough ground, these dispositions were roughly made, but this was the general plan.

I sent word to Generals Gibbon and Birney of what I had

learned and done, and those officers formed on our right. Birney formed contiguous to us in line, two lines, I think ; at any rate not in solid formation as we were. I do not know whether Gibbon formed on Birney's right or in his rear, as a reserve. I find it stated in General Hancock's report that Mott's division formed as a second line to Birney, and Gibbon acted as a reserve. When all the dispositions were made we had some two hours of sleep.

I was aroused at four o'clock, and when I went out (I slept in Mott's house) it was still very dark, and although the rain had ceased there was a very heavy, clinging mist. The men were got under arms, and at fifteen or twenty minutes after four, just as the daylight began to appear, we started. My recollection is that the division and all the brigade commanders marched in the centre of the column between the first and second lines. All were dismounted. At first we moved slowly and quietly, but before long the whole division became confused into one mass and passed into a run.

My recollection of what took place between our starting and our reaching the works is very indistinct. I should say the time was very short, say five minutes, though no doubt it was much longer. Fortunately the ground was very open, and I remember that, as we got in sight of the works, the mass instinctively swayed off to our left, that it might precipitate itself directly on the Angle, to which we had not been exactly directed at the start. The men soon began to cheer.

I remember the thin picket line of the enemy, with their bewildered look, of which no one took any notice. There was a little pattering of bullets, and I saw a few of our men on the ground ; one discharge of artillery, that I remember, and we were up on the works with our hands full of guns, prisoners, and colors.

My recollection of the enemy's resistance is only as I have stated it ; it seems to have been very slight and ineffectual, as if they were overpowered before they knew what was upon

them. I have lately talked with General Miles upon the subject, and he thinks there was a considerable fire of musketry from the enemy (such a fire as could be delivered by several thousand men firing and reloading two or three times), and that there were three discharges of artillery, either three pieces fired once each, or one piece fired three times, — probably the former, — and that our loss was considerable before we reached the works. But my recollection is otherwise, and I think he must be mistaken, for I remember that I saw only three or four of our men down. I remember this because I was surprised at the fact.

It is true that the records of the adjutant-general's office show the following losses of our division on that day : —

Killed in the First Division, Second Corps.

Commissioned Officers.	Enlisted Men.	Total.
15	206	221

Wounded.

Commissioned Officers.	Enlisted Men.	Total.
46	953	999

Missing.

Commissioned Officers.	Enlisted Men.	Total.
8	202	210

Killed, Wounded, and Missing.

Officers.	Enlisted Men.	Total.
69	1361	1430

I add here the total casualties (killed, wounded, and missing) in the 2d and 3d divisions : —

Second Division	519
Third Division	726
Artillery Brigade	30

But the losses must have been mainly during the subsequent operations of that day, and not in the first attack, which, in my opinion, involved a very small loss.

To return to the attack. The enemy's earthworks were very substantial and well built, with a very thick abatis of felled trees in front, which it would have been very difficult to get through under a cool and well-directed fire. But this mass of men, coming so unexpectedly, was irresistible, and they surged over the works like a flood.

How many men, guns, and colors were taken I cannot remember. General Miles writes me, and it is so stated in General Hancock's official report, that we took thirty flags and eighteen field-pieces at the first, besides two guns secured afterwards. The two guns last mentioned were dragged back by the enemy some distance towards his second line, and taken in by the 1st division during the next day. With the eighteen pieces were captured their horses, caissons, etc., etc. The men, guns, and flags, above mentioned, were the spoils of the whole corps. I do not remember how many of each were actually taken by my own division; I have never seen it stated.

The works were held by Johnson's division of Ewell's corps, and their general officers were Major-General Edward Johnson and Brigadier-General George H. Steuart. It was always said, and it is stated by General Hancock in his report, that the "Stonewall Brigade" was among the captured.

I reached the works very soon after the head of the column, and have a distinct recollection of the situation there at that time. It was always a matter of contention between the 1st and the 3d (Birney's) divisions as to which first reached the enemy's lines. I cannot decide this point, though I think my own division must have arrived a little earlier for two reasons. The ground over which we passed was comparatively open, while the ground in Birney's front was quite thickly wooded and somewhat marshy. Then our solid formation was better adapted to quick marching, and to a final rush, than was the long line of Birney's division.

A long line, endeavoring to keep, to some extent, its align-

ment, always must move more slowly than a solid mass having (as was the case with us, after the first few rods) no formation. But one thing is perfectly clear, that the 1st division struck the very angle of the enemy's works, and Birney the line of works to our right. The intrenchments were full of the men of my division when I reached them, and there were few, if any, of Birney's men at that precise point.

When I reached the works, there was only a scattering and feeble fire from the enemy, apparently delivered as the small number of his men who had escaped fell back. The country immediately in the rear of the Angle was nearly open, with only an occasional tree, and it could be plainly seen that there was no force of the enemy there.

I at once directed Colonel Miles to get his brigade together and move far enough forward to well clear the works, and to form a line there in order to guard against a return of the enemy and also to extend his line to our left so as to protect our flank. Off on our left the country was considerably wooded with pine-trees. All along to our right there was a forest of large trees with but little underbrush.

What ought to have been done was plain. We had carried the enemy's line at its extreme right, and practically destroyed its defenders. The occasion for "charging," for rush and confusion, was past, and troops ought to have been soberly and deliberately put in position, and ordered to sweep down the rebel line towards his left, while provision was made to guard against an attack by the enemy's second line, or the remnant of his defeated troops, upon the ground which we had taken. It was this latter object which was sought to be attained by the re-forming of Miles's brigade, which I have mentioned above, and by similar orders given to the rest of the 1st division.

This sweeping down on the enemy's flank should have been done by fresh troops, moved up slowly and deliberately. Of course the troops which had made the assault were in the

most complete confusion, and this remark applies as well to Birney's division as to my own. Not only were they broken up by the rush of the attack, but the men huddled together in the comparatively small space occupied by the Angle and the enemy's guns in search of flags, prisoners, etc. Every effort was made to restore order, and to separate the men into their own companies and regiments.

Although there was more or less of a scattering fire from the direction of the enemy, yet I am sure it was not severe enough, at least for an hour or more, to interfere with re-forming the troops. What did interfere with the restoring of order was the pouring in of fresh troops upon our backs. These did not come from our own corps alone, but from other corps as well. The fresh troops should have been moved up leisurely, and marched down on the enemy's exposed flank. Not only was this not done, but they were poured in on us until the men were forty deep. Our re-forming was embarrassed, and the great opportunity was lost.

Generally I am not able to speak accurately as to what troops were sent in after us, nor as to questions of time ; but of two things I have a very distinct and positive recollection. A very considerable time after the assault I heard a shouting in our rear, and on looking around I saw a brigade coming up upon us at double-quick and, I think, in solid formation. I was told that its commander was a General or Colonel Grant, and my impression is that it was composed of Vermont troops. It did not belong to the 2d corps. It reached the works, already crowded with our men, and mingled in the confused mass. This was not the first or last of these tumultuous accessions.

The second fact which I distinctly remember is that upon this occasion, the coming up of this brigade, I rode back to where General Hancock was, and said to him : " For God's sake, Hancock, do not send any more troops in here." And then I told him what, in my opinion, should be done ; that

is, that we should be allowed to re-form in peace and hold what we had taken, and the fresh troops should be sent to sweep down the enemy's lines. A trifling incident makes me remember this meeting with General Hancock very distinctly. It is that in my excitement I called him "Hancock," omitting the "General," which I never did before or afterwards.

There is little more to add. My own division remained during the day in about the same position that it was in an hour after the assault, except that it was extended considerably to the left, in order to guard against any attack on our flank.

We found on the 18th of May, when we made an advance from our position of the 12th, that the enemy had a strong second line half a mile or so in the rear of their first line. This was probably in existence on the 12th, and to it the remnants of the shattered division fell back, and no doubt were reinforced by other rebel troops. Finding that we neither advanced materially beyond the first line nor swept down it in flank, the enemy gradually pushed forward, until in some places they actually reached their first line, on the outer side of which our men were lying. During the greater part of the day I was with General Hancock and various other officers of rank, at what I believe was called the "Landron House," within short musket-shot of the works which we had taken, and in plain sight. You could see men of all commands intermingled and lying, in some places forty deep, on the outer side of the captured works, and on the slope which ran down from them. This was especially so just at the angle of the works. The enemy's line was at a short distance in the front, and it grew stronger, judging from the increase of the fire, as the scattered rebels returned into line or reinforcements came up.

Further to our right the enemy even returned and occupied their works, our men being on the other side of the log breastworks. I know that this is so, because on the next day

I myself saw in the excavations on the enemy's side of the log breastworks (it was at some distance to our right of the Angle) such a mass of the dead and wounded as I had only seen once before, and that was in a sunken road at Antietam, which is still called "Bloody Lane." These rebels at Spottsylvania could not have been killed at the first assault, and hence it is evident that they must have returned there later in the day. Our men were plainly visible from the Landron house, lying on the outer side of this part of the works, and it is literally true that the enemy must have been immediately on the other side.

My object in this paper is rather to give my personal recollections of what I saw on that day than to criticise its operations. But I will make one or two general observations.

So far as the assault was concerned, it was undoubtedly the most brilliant thing of its kind of the war. But I agree in the opinion expressed to me long afterwards by Colonel Morgan, that it was "a lucky accident." It was an accident that we struck this angle, always a weak point in a line; an accident that the morning was misty to an unusual degree; an accident that we found a space for our rush so free from obstacles; an accident that we so escaped the observation of the enemy's outposts and pickets that we were upon them before they could make any substantial resistance.

That we were in that solid formation which was practically irresistible was of course designed, but that such a formation was practicable was because at the last minute it was found that the nature of the ground permitted it.

As I have stated above, when we marched to the left, on the night of the 11th, there was no knowledge on our part of the various facts on which the success of the operations ultimately depended. The incidents of our march which I have mentioned sufficiently show this, and Colonel Morgan's remark to me, long afterwards, that it was "a lucky accident"

corroborates my most vivid recollection of the want on his part of all the necessary information. And I am told that Major Mendell's account of that night substantially agrees with my own. I know that when we reached a certain point I was simply told that there was the spot, and beyond that nothing.

When I had written about half of this paper, I received a copy of a part of General Hancock's report of this battle, and of the operations of the few days preceding on the river Po.

I see that General Hancock speaks of his having delayed for a little the order for the assault on May 12 on account of the mist, and of his having finally given the word at 4.35. He does not say in terms that he was present, but his statement of course implies it. I have no recollection whatever of seeing him after the interview at his headquarters, early in the evening of the 11th, until I rode out to him to protest against troops being crowded in on us, as I have above related. He did not move with us on our march, but probably came later to the Brown house, General Mott's headquarters.

But that I had no communication with or from him as to the plan of the attack, or the formation of the troops, or the enemy's position, or any matter material to the assault, I am absolutely certain. He speaks of information derived from Colonel Merriam, but so far as I acted on such information, I received it from that officer directly, and only found him after considerable trouble, and after repeated inquiries for some one who knew about the ground. What General Hancock says about Colonel Merriam's information he probably learned from me. I mention these facts not for the purpose of criticising General Hancock, whom I highly esteem and respect, but for the purpose of supporting my assertion that the success of this assault was a mere lucky accident. It certainly was not one of those enterprises in war which have been undertaken with a knowledge of the enemy's position and strength

(or even with any speculation on these subjects), or with any well-defined plan of operations.

Except in the first assault, the operations of this day were a failure. At its close we had made no substantial advance beyond the ground won by the first attack. A great opportunity had been lost. The reason of this, in my opinion, was that no one had foreseen the magnitude of the success which was coming, and hence no one was prepared for it.

It is easy to say now that the attacking column, especially if formed in mass, is always thrown into confusion, and that its place should be taken by troops moving up deliberately. This every one knows, but it was not foreseen that we should make such a gap in the enemy's lines and troops. At first troops were poured in, I suppose, on the supposition (if there was any supposition about it) that what was still needed was the impetus of a blow, while in point of fact there was nothing to strike at, and the only result was an increase of confusion. The men lay all day firing at each other, and the only result (except the guns, prisoners, and colors gained in the first half hour, and thereby a certain consequent demoralization of the enemy) was a multitude of killed and wounded.

During the night the enemy withdrew, and on the 18th we assaulted their second line without success.

My own division accomplished little after the first assault. Some men were got together in each brigade, and did such service as was to be done in the then situation of affairs, but this force was not got together in any such shape that it was available for offensive operations to any great extent. If it had been left to itself, it could have been got into order, and could have held the part of the line which it had taken (and perhaps done more), leaving other troops free for other service.

General Hancock in his report speaks of Brooke's brigade being sent to another part of the field to aid in repulsing an

attack, but I am confident that it must have been with greatly diminished numbers.

I send herewith an extract from General Hancock's report,¹ and also a copy of a letter from General Miles, giving his recollections of the assault.

Extract from letter of Lieutenant-General Nelson A. Miles,
U. S. A., dated January 6, 1879.

I have asked the assistant adjutant-general to get me the report of the casualties in your division at Spottsylvania, and I inclose his reply on a card.

I will have to-morrow an extract of General Hancock's report of that battle, which gives the number of killed on our side and the number of prisoners (about 4000) taken. Of course the [largest loss in] killed in the other divisions was occasioned by the fighting which lasted during the day and into the night; but the prisoners, thirty colors, and twenty pieces of artillery, were the result of the main assault.

I am to have the extract to-morrow at eleven o'clock, and will mail it to you at once.

My recollections of the movement and battle are that after the constant marching and fighting that occurred at the Wilderness, Corbin's Bridge, and the Po River, we were on the night of the 11th of May ordered to move to the left and be prepared to attack at four o'clock next morning.

My brigade had that evening returned from a disagreeable march or reconnoissance in the direction of Corbin's Bridge. We were moving with occasional halts, but all the time under arms and on the road all that dark and dreary night, — so dark that it was with difficulty the troops could keep the road, — and at one time two of my regiments got off the road, or on the wrong road; yet by considerable exertion we made our way through the dark forests and country roads to the point designated.

¹ 67 W. R. 330-337.

I remember that my brigade, having to follow the rest of the corps owing to my just returning from reconnoissance, was the last to get into line; the rear regiments marching up and forming double column.

Without a halt, and with a few commands given in low voice, we moved forward into the mist and darkness, it being then impossible to discern any object of attack. Passing over some low broken ground through some scattering timber, we came out in an open pasture where was posted the rebel picket line. The solid body of veteran troops appeared not to notice their presence, though they fired one round to give the alarm and then ran back to their main line.

Moving steadily on without any other guide (that I remember) than the impression or instinct that in that direction we would find the enemy, and that following up the slope we would find formidable earthworks, we pressed on in good order and keeping a fair line. As we had passed the picket we supposed we were near upon the enemy's works; some one raised a cheer which was taken up by the great mass of determined men, the sound of which must have broken like the voice of thunder upon the slumbering warriors within the Confederate line.

The mist of the morning was so dense that it was impossible to see any considerable distance beyond the head of the column. The fire of the enemy soon told us that we had not mistaken our course.

The enemy had taken pains to fell trees before their works, principally small pines; these had to be gotten over, or around, or pushed aside, and were found when within a hundred and fifty yards of the main line. Pressing on over these difficulties, we were soon under fire of both infantry and artillery, and soon came within view of the enemy's stronghold: and a most formidable front it presented. Behind a line of *chevaux-de-frise* was a strong and continuous line of earthworks, manned with a double line of infantry troops with the

black bellowing mouths of upwards of twenty pieces of artillery.

For a moment the powerful column was checked back by the obstacles to be overcome, and the deadly fire from the intrenched line; every shot taking effect in the deep column of Union troops. You could hear the sputtering sound, like the fall of hail, as the thud of their bullets fell on the head or shoulders of the men of our ranks. There were no stray shots or wild shooting at so large a living target. As those in front fell, the ranks in rear stepped, or jumped, over their bodies; and with one bold determined rush, and a loyal shout that made the forest ring, the Union lines quickly tore away the strong chevaux-de-frise, and brushed aside the rebel bayonets that were bristling over their works.

They, having discharged about three rounds per man, and not having time to load again, were preparing to hold the line with the bayonet. This lasted but a moment. As the Union soldiers jumped into their works, bayonets were crossed for an instant, when the weaker line gave way to their more powerful and now desperate antagonist.

Four thousand men threw down their arms — thirty Confederate flags fell before the Stars and Stripes — two general officers with their subordinates sheathed their swords, and several of the eighteen pieces of artillery were quickly turned on the fleeing remnant of Ewell's corps.

The famous Stonewall Jackson brigade, whose battle-cry had led many a gallant charge of the Confederate lines, with their commanders, were marched as prisoners of war to the rear; while the broken ranks of the 1st division, 2d corps, pressed on in pursuit of other foes, soon to be encountered in formidable numbers, and too powerful for those troops who had passed through the storm of one of the most desperate, deadly, and successful assaults of history.

As the enemy rallied on their reserve troops, and made counter-charges to regain their lost ground (but without suc-

cess), the fighting was continued from early morning until late at night. So desperate was the struggle that after the battle was over it was impossible to walk over the field near the line of earthworks without stepping upon the dead bodies of soldiers.

The firing was so hot that the forest trees were cut down, and the stump, 22 inches in diameter, of a solid live-oak tree now stands in the War Department that was cut in twain by bullets during the battle; its top falling amidst the living, and upon the dead and wounded: Major Church dodged it as it fell.

Later in the day, as one of our guns was going into action, the horses and riders fell in one mass before the deadly hail of lead that rained upon the disputed ground.

After the struggle was over the field presented a sight that has not to my knowledge been equaled in any battle-field of our war, if it has in any of modern times.

In the above lines I have given a few recollections of the incidents of that brilliant assault and of its results. In my own brigade I lost upwards of six hundred out of about twenty-two hundred, which was a heavy loss; but it was the first over the works, and led what might have been the complete destruction of the rebel army. *These facts I know, for I was right there.*

I presume you are more familiar with many points of interest regarding that battle than myself. I will send you the extract of Hancock's report as soon as received.

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X

REVIEW OF MAJOR-GENERAL BARLOW'S
PAPER ON THE CAPTURE OF THE SALIENT
AT SPOTTSYLVANIA MAY 12 1864

BY

BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL LEWIS A. GRANT

U. S. V., BRIGADIER GENERAL COMMANDING SECOND BRIGADE, SECOND
DIVISION, SIXTH ARMY CORPS

Read before the Society March 14, 1881

REVIEW OF MAJOR-GENERAL F. C. BARLOW'S PAPER ON THE CAPTURE OF THE SALIENT AT SPOTTSYLVANIA MAY 12 1864

MY attention has been called to a paper by General F. C. Barlow, read before the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts on "The Capture of the Salient at Spottsylvania, May 12, 1864." As the paper contains some errors and refers to my presence, it may not be improper for me to state "my recollection" of the events unasked.

My command was the 2d brigade of the 2d division of the 6th corps, generally known as the "Old Vermont Brigade." Of what transpired before the arrival of the 6th corps I will not speak, except that it is a matter of history that the 2d corps under General Hancock made a brilliant attack and captured a portion of the enemy's lines and forces.

All the honor and the success of the early morning operations belong to the 2d corps, while the subsequent operations of the day were participated in chiefly by the 6th corps.

Considerable time elapsed after the attack before the arrival of the 6th corps. The enemy had time to recover somewhat from his surprise, and to send forward troops to recover the works lost. While the 6th corps was marching to the scene of action, and before reaching the open space in front of the captured works, we were in the range of quite a heavy artillery fire. Though probably not intended for us, a number of shells passed through the tree-tops or burst over our heads.

Upon arriving at the open space referred to, I was ordered to the left of the 2d corps to relieve General Barlow's division from the front. I found his command considerably

broken and disorganized — no doubt the result of the attack. A sharp and quick attack like that of General Hancock's, especially in a broken country and on a misty morning, will unavoidably result in more or less confusion and disorganization. The works in front had been carried, and in the timber beyond there was some skirmishing and an evident attempt on the part of the enemy to recover lost ground.

Whether an opportunity had been lost "to sweep down the rebel line toward his left," or whether there had been delay and loss of time in "re-forming the troops," it is not my province to say. But what I do know and say is that our arrival DID NOT "interfere with the restoring of order" and did not in any wise embarrass "reorganization" or prevent any aggressive movement designed or desired on the part of troops already there. Our arrival was not only orderly but opportune. There was no organized line in our front, and the skirmishers in the woods were being pressed back.

In marching to General Barlow's rear, we moved by the flank. Arriving there we threw forward a skirmish line and advanced in two lines of battle. Whether the men cheered or not I cannot say. They were in the habit of doing it when advancing upon the enemy's lines, and it is quite probable they did on this occasion. But I am quite sure they would not have done so had they supposed it would have "embarrassed" the "re-forming" of General Barlow's command. That "a fire in the rear" might embarrass the "re-forming" of troops is easy to be seen, but how "a cheer in the rear" and the arrival of fresh troops could produce that result is not quite so clear.

In that advance our lines were preserved and were not broken. And my troops did not "mingle in the confused mass" of troops already there. The only confusion possibly created by us was in our skirmishers passing the troops and relieving the skirmish line. This was done quickly and with as little confusion as generally attends such movements.

In a short time General Hancock came there and called my attention to the fact that General Russell of the 6th corps was actively engaged on our right and wanted help, and told me to take my rear line and go to his assistance, and that he would send the rest of my command as soon as he could bring down troops of his own to relieve them. Leaving my front line and skirmishers in the command of one of my colonels, I immediately marched my rear line to the right as far as the Angle, and then moved still further to the right, where I found General Wheaton trying to advance his brigade against the enemy's well-manned works. The ground was nearly level and covered with thick brush and trees of small growth. As he occupied the front line, I could do but little except to form in his rear. The advance was impracticable, and was soon abandoned. Leaving one regiment with General Wheaton, I took the rest back to the Angle and there met the balance of my command, which had been relieved and sent up from the left by General Hancock. The subsequent operations of the day were mostly at the Angle.

I speak thus in detail of my own movements, not only to show that we created no confusion among our friends, but to show that I had some means of knowledge of the condition of the line, and of the position of troops. General Barlow is evidently laboring under a misapprehension of facts. He not only has an "indistinct recollection" of what occurred that morning, but is in evident error as to the position of the troops and the location of the Angle.

General Barlow *was not at the Angle* that morning when I came in his rear and relieved him from the front. I went into position in the manner described fully one-half mile to the left of the Angle. I think it must have been more. That he did not strike the Angle in his attack is quite apparent from his own language. He says: "Fortunately the ground was very open, and I remember that, as we got in sight of the works, the mass instinctively swayed off to our left, that it

might precipitate itself directly on the Angle, to which we had not been exactly directed at the start."

Now if he was in the open ground, and in his advance "swayed off to the left," he would necessarily have passed to the left of the Angle, and would have naturally struck the enemy's lines about where he was when I reached him. The ground was open on our side *at* the Angle and to our *left* of it, but it was not open except for a few yards to our *right* of the Angle. To the right of the Angle was a thick growth of small timber and brush — very difficult for troops to advance in, especially before light. I repeat, if he was in the open ground and then swayed to the left, he must have gone to the left of the Angle.

The short open space at the right of the Angle, and between it and the timber and brush, was occupied at about eight or nine o'clock in the morning by two pieces of artillery and our noble dead. Every man at the guns had been shot down in his place.

Unfortunately I have not read General Hancock's report of that engagement, and can speak of the situation only as I saw it. But at the time I marched in and relieved General Barlow's command, the enemy were making some show of strength in the woods, in our advance of the works, and there was hot firing of musketry on our right; and when I marched to the right of the Angle (which could not have been much, if any, over half an hour after coming into the first position), the enemy was in full possession of one side of the works *at the Angle, and to the right of it*. It was quite evident that he was making a desperate attempt to recover lost ground.

It was at the Angle that the severe fighting of the day took place. It was there that at least five of the eight brigades of the 6th corps fought nearly all day. General Eustis was there with his brigade; Colonel, now General, Upton was there with his brigade; Colonel, afterwards General, Bidwell was

there with his brigade; I was there with my brigade; and there was another brigade there, commanded, I think (though I am not certain), by Colonel Truax. General Wheaton, with his brigade and one of my regiments, was in the thick brush to our right. I do not recollect seeing any of the 2d corps there, but there were troops to our left in the direction of the position I first occupied that morning.

The Angle became at once the key-point and the scene of a terrible struggle. It was apparent that if we held it, all the line to the right would fall into our hands, and equally apparent that if we failed to hold it, the captured lines to the left would fall into the enemy's hands.

Perhaps there was not a more desperate struggle during the war. It was not only a desperate struggle, but it was literally a hand-to-hand fight. Nothing but the piled-up logs or breast-works separated the combatants. Our men would reach over the logs and fire into the faces of the enemy, would stab over with their bayonets; many were shot and stabbed through crevices and holes between the logs; men mounted the works, and with muskets rapidly handed them kept up a continuous fire until they were shot down, when others would take their places and continue the deadly work.

General Upton personally attended to the securing of two pieces of artillery, which when loaded were repeatedly wheeled up by hand to a low or open place in the works on the left side of the Angle, from which the enemy's lines were enfiladed with great effect.

During the day the point could be seen from the "Landron House" in the rear, and it is not strange that from that distance men would sometimes appear "forty deep."

There were five brigades there, and they were considerably huddled, but organization was sufficiently preserved for effective work.

Several times during the day the rebels would show a white flag above the works, and when our fire slackened, jump

over and surrender, and others were crowded down to fill their places.

Scores, and no doubt hundreds, of men are now living who were engaged in that conflict, and whose recollections of it are vivid. It was there that the somewhat celebrated tree was cut off by bullets; there that the brush and logs were cut to pieces and whipped into basket-stuff; there that fallen men's flesh was torn from the bones and the bones shattered; there that the rebel ditches and cross-sections were filled with dead men several deep. It was there where General Barlow says: "I myself saw in the excavation on the enemy's side of the log breastworks such a mass of the dead and wounded as I had only seen once before, and that was in a sunken road at Antietam, which is still called Bloody Lane." He clings to the error that "it was at some distance to our right of the Angle," though he quite naturally concludes that, inasmuch as these rebels "could not have been killed at the first assault, it is evident that they must have returned there later in the day."

It was nearly night when I withdrew my command from the Angle, and after dark we marched into a dense woods considerably to the right. Others continued the conflict late into the night, and the result was that the entire line fell into our hands.

I was at the Angle the next day. The sight was terrible and sickening; much worse than at Bloody Lane. There a great many dead men were lying in the road and across the rails of the torn-down fences and out in the cornfield; but they were not piled up several deep, and their flesh was not so torn and mangled as at the Angle. I went along the line to the right of the Angle. There was no such evidence of a conflict there. There were a few dead men scattered along on the rebel side of the works, but not more than might have been expected from the effects of our enfilading fire from the Angle. But in our front of the works, all along to the right

of the Angle for nearly half a mile, were our own dead, lying in the brush from 200 to 400 yards from the works, where they fell in the assault.

That General Barlow is laboring under a mistake as to the location of the Angle and what took place there is obvious for other reasons. It is, however, fortunate for history that of "two things" he is quite certain, that he "heard a shouting in our rear," and that he said, "For God's sake, Hancock, do not send any more troops in here." Of these "two things" he says, "I have a very distinct and positive recollection." It is perhaps not strange that he should be in error about other and minor events of the day.

XI

THE CAPTURE OF THE SALIENT AT SPOTT-
SYLVANIA MAY 12 1864

BY

BREVET LIEUTENANT-COLONEL WILLIAM R. DRIVER

U. S. V., LATE MAJOR AND A. A. G. TO GENERAL W. S. HANCOCK

REVIEWING THE PAPERS OF GENERAL F. C. BARLOW, U. S. V.,
OF CAPTAIN MCHENRY HOWARD, C. S. A., AND OF
GENERAL LEWIS A. GRANT, U. S. V.

Read before the Society April 10, 1882

THE CAPTURE OF THE SALIENT AT SPOTT- SYLVANIA MAY 12 1864.

THE encounter, on the 8th May, 1864, between two bodies of hostile troops which were moving towards the same point led to the intrenchment by the rebel forces of the position in which, after the immediate emergency had passed, they were halted for the night. Finding on the next day their opponents still in their front, the line was corrected and their right thrown back, forming the now historic position of the "Salient," the location of the most prominent if not the only successful attack by the Army of the Potomac during the great Rapidan campaign. There were no natural advantages in the position; it was merely the crest of a low ridge, overlooked from a higher elevation in its immediate front, and with but a short space of open ground at the point and to its left. Accidentally taken up, it was accidentally discovered by the opposing forces; and at its fall the accidents of circumstance so favored the assailants that the theory of an accidental capture was not without apparent justification. Twice captured by the Federal troops, it was only finally held after obstinate and costly fighting against the determined and persistent efforts of its builders to regain its possession, and by the concentration of large bodies of troops on both sides. The accidental discovery of the shape of the line here determined the attempt to force it. Beyond the fact that there was here a projecting angle in the enemy's line, the knowledge of the position and its approaches was of the slightest, and the endeavor by officers of General Hancock's staff, sent out by him on the 11th after his receipt of orders to make the attack, resulted in little addition to that already in possession.

General Hancock says even the exact location was unknown. A demonstration by General Mott, commanding the 4th division of the 2d corps, in order to get an observation of the works, was only partially successful.

The 2d corps had, during the 11th of May, remained quietly in its position, and except Colonel Miles's brigade, which had reconnoitred on the Catharpin Road, and two regiments that had been sent across the Po, they had not been engaged. Late in the day General Hancock, having received orders to make an attack on the next morning (12th), summoned the commanders of the 1st, 2d, and 3d divisions, to report to him at his headquarters. The 4th division, General Mott, had on the 9th been sent to the extreme left of the army, and its commander therefore was not sent for. Generals Birney, Gibbon, and Barlow reported in obedience to the summons, and received from General Hancock his instructions for the movement, with such information concerning the location and character of the works as he had at his disposal. I can find no copies of written orders with these instructions, although I am confident such were prepared. I presume they were in circular form and have from some accident failed to find their proper place in the official records. General Barlow remained with General Hancock after the departure of the others, and discussed with him the details of the operation. The formation of the 1st division in a close column was then determined upon as best for the purpose, provided the nature of the ground should be found such as to render it practicable. It was expected that this division would take the burden of the principal attack, and the arrangements were all made with that view. There was no effort to shut from view the serious and important character of the affair, and the details were arranged with all the careful consideration which they demanded. After a careful settlement of all probable questions that might arise, General Barlow left the headquarters to put his division in motion towards the

point near the Brown house, about half a mile from the work to be attacked, which had been designated for the formation of the column.

General Barlow's graphic description of the night march of the troops and its difficulties leaves nothing to be said to convey a complete understanding of that uncomfortable experience. The intense darkness, pouring rain, and muddy, heavy roads, with the uncertainty regarding the direction and location of the point to be reached, formed just the combination required to produce a brilliant display of grumbling by officers and men, such as General Barlow writes of. Indulgence in this under such circumstances was regarded as an inalienable right, which was fully exercised, but in no way prevented the exercise of the utmost energy in the removal of obstacles or interfered with the ability to discover a ludicrous side to affairs where it would sometimes appear to be closely concealed and to require careful search to bring it to light.

General Barlow writes of this movement as "haphazard in its character," but I doubt if the term will apply to this more than to most similar ones during that campaign. In the nature of things, little could be known of the enemy's position at a particular moment, since each side was constantly changing place to meet actual or expected changes by the other. To meet the enemy with a stronger force than his own at the point of attack was the problem to be solved by each of the great soldiers then face to face, but with armies unequal in point of numbers. An attack by an army moving only in one direction must be made without previous reconnoissance, as the chance of a successful second attack was of the slightest.

General Barlow says the head of the column reached the vicinity of the Brown house at midnight or half an hour after. Captain Howard says¹ that shortly after dark the pickets in his front reported that there had for some time been indi-

¹ *Ante* p. 112.

cations of the movement of a large Federal force apparently massing in their front, or moving towards their (the rebel) right. I can hardly account for this by the movement actually made, as the darkness on that stormy night came on early, and the sound could hardly have reached them long before midnight, when the head of the column reached the vicinity. If the sound could so readily be heard at the Angle, it should have been as readily heard by the pickets farther to its left and reported as moving toward it, while on the rebel left the reports were that the Federals were passing towards their own right. Captain Howard may have mistaken the time, and the movement have been reported to him while it was actually going on.

Having arrived in the vicinity of the Brown house, the dispositions for attack were at once made. The brigades of Colonels Brooke and Miles were placed in the first line, each regiment being formed in column doubled on the centre and closed in mass. The brigades of Colonels Smythe and Brown were formed in two lines and closed upon the leading brigades, thus forming a solid column. Colonels Miles and Brown formed the right. The 2d Delaware regiment marched by the right flank on the left flank of the column as a protection against attack from that direction.

Here, then, was an organization whose capacity for striking a decisive blow was, I believe, unequalled by any formed at any other time during that campaign. The 1st division of the 2d corps was at that time without a superior in the Army of the Potomac. In the Wilderness and on the banks of the Po River it had shown by the eminent ability and skill of its division and brigade commanders, and by the steadfast courage of its regimental officers and men, that it could be safely relied upon to do all that the occasion demanded.

On the right of this column General Birney's 3d division was deployed in two lines, with General Mott's 4th division in its rear. General Gibbon's division, the 2d, was deployed

in rear of the 1st, but was not to move with it nor before the column had struck the works.

These dispositions made, the men could take such rest as the weather allowed till daylight should bring the signal for the attempt from which such important results were hoped. General Barlow has given the results of his search for information concerning the position against which he, as commander of the division from which was expected the important work of the morning, was to deliver the decisive blow. General Hancock says the direction of the march was determined by compass.

At four o'clock, the hour fixed for the commencement of the march, a thick fog delayed the arrival of daylight, and decided the usually prompt General Hancock to delay the order to move. He was on the ground, and at 4.35 gave, as he says in his report, the word to advance.

In the column the commander of the division and those of the brigades marched dismounted in the centre. General Barlow had given this to General Hancock, on the evening before, as the point where he could be found by any officer he should need to send to him. At the moment of starting, the fog still obscured the ground to be passed over. It may be that this, with the almost entire lack of knowledge of the country so concealed and of the works beyond, against which the heavy column was about to be hurled, gave a serious tone and air to the conversation and bearing of those composing it. There was neither despondency nor reluctance, but apparently a full appreciation of the difficulty of the undertaking gave an air of determination to those engaged.

Moving silently forward, the column soon encountered the picket line of the enemy posted upon a ridge, of which the nearer slope was slight and easy, but the farther one towards the works was longer and more abrupt. These pickets fired and fell back at once to the main line.

No notice of this was taken by the advancing column,

except that a few men raised a cheer and all quickened the pace. Passing down the slope, the left of the line found the ground open and to the foot of the slope unobstructed. On the right the divisions of Birney and Mott found it wooded and marshy, and passed over it with some difficulty. At a distance of about a hundred and fifty yards in front of the works a difficult abatis had been made by felling trees and interlacing the branches. This caused some delay in the 1st division, while openings were made for the passage, and here was some loss from the fire of the enemy. This obstruction was soon removed, and the troops pushed on and over the works. Here for a few moments the fighting was at close quarters, and the bayonet was frequently used. The statement that troops fought with the bayonet is frequently made without a solid foundation, but there is good authority for it in this instance, and I think it can be maintained. Here was received the fire from two guns posted a short distance from the Angle towards its right and about the centre of Steuart's position. Captain Howard says the guns belonging at the Angle had been withdrawn on the previous evening, and, returning, had not time to come into action before the attacking troops overran and captured them. Colonel Brooke's brigade struck the works at the Angle and overlapped the point on the right and left. Colonel Miles was of course on its (his) right. The 1st division having during the advance borne off to the left, an interval had been opened between it and the 3d division, which General Mott had filled with his 4th division. Brooke's left passed near the Landrum house. The 2d division was to have delayed its movement until the column had struck the works, and I think did so delay it, but I have been told recently by officers of that division that they were among the first in the rebel works. I think, however, that this is a mistake, due probably to an imperfect recollection of an occurrence of eighteen years ago. General Webb has promised me a statement of his recollections of the day,

but it has not yet reached me. Generals Birney and Mott struck the works in their front at the same time with General Barlow, meeting no effective resistance.

I do not quite understand what troops were those referred to by Captain Howard¹ as appearing and disappearing in his front some minutes before the arrival of the main force. It may have been that the detached regiment that was placed on the left flank of the column found the ground easier to pass over, and thus, being so far to the left, moved down the line of works on the outside, in advance of the movement of the principal force.

The works having been overrun and possession taken by the assaulting column, the rebel defenders surrendered after short resistance, and were immediately marched to the Federal rear and placed in charge of the provost marshal of the army. In this passage a few of the unfortunates were struck by bullets from their friends who had escaped capture and who continued their resistance. Generals Johnson and Steuart were taken to General Hancock, who received them with his usual courteous manner. One of them, however, could not control his feelings sufficiently to accept the courtesy of his captor, and was permitted to enjoy his martyrdom in his own way.

The works were found to be the usual structures of rails and earth; and for a short distance from the point of the Angle on each side were built square pits, like pens, for a more complete protection from the fire to which the position was exposed from the right, left, and front. Had the artillery of the enemy been in position to open its fire when the column struck his pickets and while it was passing down the farther slope of the ravine, or while it was momentarily delayed for the forcing of the line of abatis, or during the advance up the slope immediately in front of the works, the depth of the column must have been the opportunity for great effect and

¹ *Ante*, p. 114.

consequent loss. The demoralizing effect of artillery fire upon a body of such depth would have been serious. While passing through the hollow between the slopes, the left of the column was somewhat sheltered from the infantry fire from the works and suffered little loss, as the bullets mostly passed over the heads of the men. The right, being on somewhat higher ground, suffered more.

Passing over the works, the successful troops pushed on in pursuit of those who had escaped capture and fled to the rear. Here the country was wooded and broken, sloping from the works, in places quite abruptly. The passage through woods, ravines, and marshy ground increased the confusion ordinarily consequent upon even a successful assault. The second line of the Confederates was found beyond some swampy ground, but the troops were in no condition to attack at once, and were withdrawn to the captured works, where they were soon followed by the enemy and attacked with tremendous energy.

This occupation of the enemy's works, with the possession of many guns, colors, and prisoners, completed the result of the morning's work. For the remainder of the day, the defense of the line against the persistent and desperate attempts of the enemy to retake it gave full employment to the men of the 2d and 6th corps. This defense was successfully maintained, but with serious losses.

Respecting the point of the works struck by the attacking column, I doubt if General Barlow's claim that he struck the very Angle can be successfully contested.

General Brooke says¹ that his brigade, the left of the column, struck the point of the Angle, overlapping it on both flanks. Captain Howard says² that Steuart's brigade was at the (his) right of the Angle, and that the other three brigades of Johnson's division continued the line from that point toward their left. His account of the attack definitely states that the first cheering and all the firing, except a volley from

¹ 67 W. R. 410.

² *Ante*, p. 111.

his men at the small body mentioned as appearing and disappearing in their front, came from his left and from the direction of the Salient, and that the first fugitive came from the same direction. Then the prisoners taken were all from the division occupying the Angle on the right and left. If General Barlow had missed the point of the Salient and had passed down outside the works, he could have gone but a short distance before entirely passing Steuart's line of about 900 men.

That General Barlow should have been, not at the Angle, but half a mile to our left of it, upon the arrival of the troops of the 6th corps, is not surprising. Indeed, had he then been there, it would have been cause for wonder; for after breaking the line, the whole attacking force pushed on in pursuit of the smaller number of its defenders who escaped capture at the first rush and ran towards the second line. The commander of such a force, successful certainly, but in confusion as a consequence of its success, if not with his men, should show a pressing need for his presence elsewhere to justify his absence from his troops. The men of the 1st division were then some distance, probably that named, half a mile, from the point of their entrance to the works. General Barlow's habit of keeping well to the front was perfectly understood by the staff officers who had occasion to seek him in action. I find no claim that he was then at the Angle. Having completed his business there, he was attending to the reorganization of his division.

On returning to the defense of the captured line against the enemy's attempts at recapture, the 1st division became the left of the 2d corps, which General Hancock says was entirely at the left of the Angle during the rest of the day.

General Barlow says the ground over which his division passed to the attack was comparatively open, while General Birney on his right advanced over a thickly wooded and somewhat marshy country.

Captain Howard describes the ground in his front as densely wooded and marshy, while off the Salient it was comparatively open and sloping from the works.

By those acquainted with General Barlow, his statement of the point struck by his column would be accepted as final, without question that he might be mistaken by reason of confusion and excitement consequent upon an attack such as that described. By others the substantial agreement of his account with that of Captain Howard may, I think, be accepted as conclusive that he did strike the Angle at the exact point aimed at.

Respecting his theory that the assault was merely a lucky accident, I think he is too general, and does himself less than justice. To be sure, all the accidents were in our favor, but that it can be merely accidental that such superior soldiers as he and General Morgan should succeed in doing just what they were directed to do, and should strike a blow just where it was intended to fall, even against a defense more favored by circumstances, I doubt.

The fog, the open ground, and the absence of the enemy's artillery were so many chances in our favor; but had all these chances been against them, the work would have been done, though at greater cost. The 2d corps, formed for attack, commanded and officered as it was on the 12th May, would surely have reached those works, even though the favorable conditions had been wanting.

That the results of this operation were merely the occupation of one side of the enemy's works, without decisive effect upon the general objects of the campaign, owing to a doubt of its success and a consequent failure to prepare to take advantage of the opportunity success would bring, may be true, but not creditable to those responsible for such a condition of things.

Swinton says that a partial cause for the stopping of the column was that the fire and enthusiasm of the troops were

not sustained. Fire and enthusiasm need organization to make them available in such a position as that in which the 2d corps found itself after its advance beyond the captured works. I doubt if good evidence can be produced that the former were wanting. Time and cover would have supplied the latter. May it not be that the statement made in the report of General Grant, that "a general attack was made on the enemy in position," will furnish a reason for the failure to take advantage of the first success, and that, in pursuance of the attrition policy, any incidental advantage was of little account and possibly unexpected? General attacks along the entire line were not unknown in that campaign, but the net results were usually long lists of killed, wounded, and missing on our part, with shorter similar lists and some inconvenience on the part of the enemy.

Of the determined fighting during the rest of that day, there is little to be said. The troops remained in their position behind the captured works, firing without ceasing and suffering heavy loss until long after darkness hid the combatants from each other's sight.

XII

THE OPERATIONS OF THE ARMY OF THE
POTOMAC MAY 13-JUNE 2 1864

BY

BREVET MAJOR WILLIAM P. SHREVE, U. S. V.

Read before the Society February 14, 1881

THE OPERATIONS OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC MAY 13-JUNE 2 1864

THE movements you are asked to follow to-night are those that were made between the 13th of May and the 2d of June, 1864, or from the day after the battle at the Spottsylvania Salient Angle to the day when the army was in line at Cold Harbor, being all but the first six days of the second epoch of the campaign, the whole of the third, and six days of the fourth. In contrast with what took place before and that which immediately followed, this flank movement may seem tame and uninteresting to study, the details being much the same as those of other marches. But little that is new can be told of it, or of the fighting that occurred during its execution, and my only hope is to be able to refresh your recollections by bringing together in a few pages what is scattered through many books, and supplementing them from my own notes made at the time and my memory.

General Grant says in his report, "The 13th to the 18th were consumed in manœuvring and awaiting the arrival of reinforcements." We might read between these lines of marching, skirmishing, and assault, of road-building, of the throwing up of the simple rifle-pit and the more elaborate earthwork, and shall find enough if written in detail to fill volumes, and so we shall learn of that of which the report takes no note (even giving us the impression, as we hurry on, that those were days of rest and exemption from danger), that in those few days many hundreds of dead and wounded were added to the tens of thousands all about us. In our imagination we can follow that long, sad procession of wounded comrades moving towards the north via Fredericksburg and Aquia Creek, the new base opened about this time, along

with whom moved the prisoners on their way to the prison depots ; while streaming in the opposite direction were the clean, fresh regiments from the defense of Washington, wagons loaded with subsistence, clothing, forage, and ammunition, the new horses for batteries and ambulances, all of which were to be distributed along that line of men in the front, who had but a vague idea of the immense work that was going on behind them. Never before in the history of the army had such a wonderful work been done ; never before had it been attempted when the army was actually in contact with the enemy.

But General Grant had no idea of changing his attitude while replenishing the waste of his army. Evidently in his mind fighting was the first thing to be done, and there is little doubt that he premeditated another blow at the enemy's right flank on the 14th, although we find nothing that can be construed into an order to that effect. If it was so, the rain prevented its execution, although it did not save the 5th and 6th corps from a night of severe marching. On the morning of the 13th the armies faced each other behind their earthworks, both ready to carry out the orders that were sure to come, without either side evincing any disposition to withdraw from the close contact which had been maintained for one week. There was everything in the morning that was disagreeable. The rain had been falling for hours. The rations were with many — and probably with those who needed them most — entirely gone. Very few had tasted a drop of their greatest comforter, coffee, for more than twenty-four hours ; most had scarcely enough muddy water to quench their thirst ; and if the truth were known, it would show that that with which many men moistened their lips through the long hours of the night just ended had an infusion of the blood of their comrades ; and then, to crown the discomfort, before the hour at which it should have been daylight, the firing began again that had ceased since midnight on all the line excepting where the 2d

corps joined its right to the 6th. Some of the horrors of that morning we strive to forget even when we recall our miseries.

Wet, weary, hungry, thirsty, how little the army of this morning resembled that of the week before. Out of it had been taken Sedgwick and Wadsworth and Stevenson and Hayes and Rice. Among the wounded or prisoners were Getty, Webb, Robinson, Morris, Shaler, Seymour, Baxter, Carroll, and, besides them, many others whose names will ever be associated in your minds with these days; to which we must add the thousands that cannot ever all be named of dead, wounded, prisoners, and missing. And when we have summed up the aggregate, we shall still be unable to conceive how unlike the army was, on the 13th of May, to that which went into the fight on the 5th.

It is a curious coincidence that on this and the following day, both Generals Meade and Lee should have thought it a proper time to issue congratulatory addresses to their armies. General Meade in his sums up the work that has been done, says¹ the enemy "has abandoned the last intrenched position so tenaciously held," announces that the "work is not yet over," and that "we shall soon receive reinforcements," which the enemy "cannot expect." It is an order far from the vain-glorious mood that had shown itself in former ones we had read from others, not overconfident in tone, but it probably had a good effect. The order of General Lee was a more subtle one, and we can imagine there is in it an indication that the writer saw even then the beginning of the end; certainly it impresses us now with the idea that thereafter the Confederate policy would be simply the defensive—as it certainly was. After enumerating seven successes achieved by the Confederate armies on as many fields, the principal of which was General Banks's defeat by General Kirby Smith, General Lee says, "The heroic valor of this army, with the blessing of Almighty God, has thus far checked the principal

¹ 67 W. R. 197.

army of the enemy and inflicted upon it heavy losses." He claims no success for, admits no defeat of his own command.

Our line on the morning of the 13th was constituted with the 5th corps on the right, then the 6th, 2d, and 9th, crowded into the space around the "Great Angle," and extending from the Ny River on the left to the road to Todd's Tavern on the right. There was probably no division front free from skirmish firing that morning, but especially was it severe on the 2d corps front when we were anxious to know how far back the enemy had fallen, and they anxious to keep us ignorant as long as possible. To develop their new line, General Gibbon was ordered to send out a brigade. He selected that of General Owen for the duty and Colonel Carroll to command it, and after some sharp work the desired information was obtained. Colonel Carroll had been wounded in the arm a few days previously, but had remained on duty, although much against the advice of the surgeon, and in this affair he was struck in the elbow joint of his sound arm, and the bones so splintered as to long disable him from active service. Six of the limbers and caissons captured the day before, but remaining between the lines, were brought in by Captain Sleeper's battery (10th Massachusetts). They were a mass of splinters.

About nine o'clock in the evening, the 5th corps began to move past in rear of the 2d. The evening resembled all those we knew in this region, in that a thick fog arose as soon as the sun went down which rendered the night doubly dark. Through fog and mud, through field and woods all unknown to them before, the 5th corps pushed on, or groped rather; and at daylight the head of its column, now scattered all along the path it had marched, came out upon the Fredericksburg Road. The 6th followed the 5th, but the day was far advanced before it arrived in the same vicinity; in fact it was morning before its rear was really under way. The 5th pushed its line forward as soon as one could be formed, connecting with the left

of the 9th corps, and commenced to intrench. It was very soon discovered that its position was commanded by an eminence on the left called by the varied names "Jet House" (by Swinton), "Gayle House" (by the government map), and elsewhere as the "Myers Farm." Lieutenant-Colonel Otis, with some "regulars," occupied the ground without much opposition, and General Upton's brigade from the 6th corps was sent to extend the line and intrench. This it had just commenced when it was suddenly set upon and driven out. Later in the day the point was reoccupied by the brigade of General Ayres, supported by a detachment from General Neill's division (6th corps). General Meade speaks of this point as "an advanced position." It afterwards came to be in rear of our line, and evidently was not considered a position of much importance to the enemy, and their push for it could only have been to ascertain what was being done beyond.

General Early mentions this affair in his "narrative."¹ "General Mahone made two or three reconnoissances to the front, in one of which he encountered a body of the enemy which had got possession of Gayle's house on the left of the road leading from our right towards the Fredericksburg and Hanover Junction Road, at which a portion of our cavalry under General Chambliss had been posted. He drove it back across the Ny."

On the morning of the 14th, as soon as the enemy noticed the withdrawal of the 5th and 6th corps, he advanced and occupied a portion of the line. The 2d corps, now the extreme right of the army, conformed to its new position by drawing back from the old breastworks to higher ground, where new ones were constructed. The enemy of course followed, curious to know just what was being done, and once a considerable force appeared in the Angle, and Birney sent out a couple of regiments (86th and 124th New York) to dislodge it.

On the 15th the divisions of Barlow and Gibbon were with-

¹ *The Last Year of the War, etc.* By Lieutenant-General J. A. Early, p. 26.

drawn from the line of the 2d corps and massed on the other side of the Ny. Birney's division extended the line to the left and connected with the 9th corps. The enemy recovered thirteen caissons that remained on debatable ground, near the Angle. Anderson moved to Early's right at night, the division of Field having preceded him.

To men of the old 3d corps this day is memorable as witnessing another consolidation of what there was left of that organization. The division that had been commanded by General Hayes, and by General Mott since his death, was merged into General Birney's division.

The 16th was a day that in comparison may be called quiet, so far as fighting is in question, but there was digging all along the line, especially on the flanks. General Burnside says he ordered a reconnoissance "by the 1st and 2d divisions to the front, which resulted in developing a large force of the enemy." No corroborating testimony to this is found in any of the works at my command, and it may be concluded that it was, like most of the 9th corps demonstrations, feeble. An ambulance train under strong escort went out beyond our right at nightfall, and a large number of wounded were brought in. No opposition was offered to the expedition.

The 17th was another similar day until near the close, when a dash was made on our right flank on the Ny by a brigade of the enemy, who seemed to be satisfied upon finding where we rested. An order was issued reducing all the six-gun batteries to four.

To me this day is memorable for a sensation that left a lasting impression. Tyler's division of heavy artillery, converted into infantry, had arrived from Washington, or rather was this day on the march from Fredericksburg, and an order assigning it to the 2d corps had been received. Besides this a regiment, or it may have been a brigade, called the Corcoran Legion, came, which was placed in General Gibbon's division. The first notice we had of its arrival was the noise made by this

body of men (which was as large as any one of our brigades, exhibiting in their outfit as lamentable a contrast to our tattered demalions as can well be imagined) coming into line near our headquarters and "counting off by twos." This remarkable sight and the sound of that well-remembered enumeration, which we had heard so seldom of late, were enough to bring our men running from every direction to wonder at it. It was an assuring sight, however, and did us all good.

During the night the 6th corps and the two divisions of the 2d were marched back to the position where the left of the 2d assaulted on the 12th. The 9th joined the line, and at four o'clock on the morning of the 18th moved forward to a useless assault over the ground where our dead were lying, yet unburied, up to the main Confederate works. It seems needless for any one to write that to take them was an impossibility. An almost impenetrable abatis, or slashing, protected them, and what they were in part may be gathered from the diary on file among the papers of this Society, contributed by Colonel Lyman, who visited the spot in later years. He said,¹ "The final line which the enemy drew across the base of the Salient Angle was [is] a curiosity of fortification. The high parapet was [is] not only traversed as often as every ten or twelve feet, but was [is] inclosed in the rear, so that the line was [is] divided into a series of square pens, with banks of earth heavily riveted with oak logs. From space to space was [is] an elevated post for sharpshooters, with a loophole in front." The same diary mentions finding, "quite within the advance rebel cross-line near the point where our left rested after the capture of the works, the graves of two privates and a sergeant of the Corcoran Legion." These men fell in their first fight on this day, and their graves no doubt mark the position to which the division of Gibbon advanced. The loss in this Corcoran Legion alone was seventy. The 9th corps assaults, made by the divisions of Generals Crittenden and

¹ *Ante*, p. 237.

Potter, met with no better success than did those made by the 2d, and the same may be said of the 6th. The 5th, far away on the left, opened its artillery and pushed out skirmishers, but its participation was intended to be only demonstrative.

The division of Birney was in reserve, but on the right of the 6th corps, and moved out to the face of the Angle, where it had gone over on the 12th, and remained there during the day. The division of Tyler since its arrival had been near the Harris house, on the road to Fredericksburg.

By eleven o'clock A. M. the attack was decided to be a failure and the men withdrawn, the enemy not making an attempt to follow. At night the 6th corps returned to its former position on the left of the 5th, the 9th was started to extend the line yet farther, by forming on the left of the 6th, reaching when in position to the Quesenbury house. The rear of the 2d corps left the Landrum house at two o'clock of the morning of the 19th, and by daylight it was massed on the Anderson farm near army headquarters.

It is noticeable that General Meade has no mention in his report of the assault of the 18th that cost us at least 1000 men.

On the morning of the 19th, the 5th corps was the right of the line resting at the Ny near the Fredericksburg Road, the 6th on its left, then the 9th, while the 2d was across the Ny in the rear of the 5th. It might be quite as proper to say that the 2d was the extreme right of the line in reality.

All that day of the 19th there was remarkable quiet, which very many appreciated because it was the first day from under fire since crossing the Rapidan. Those who had writing, official or private, made good use of the time to dispatch it, and every one remembers the delight from a bath and a change of clothing, if that was to be had, on that delightful spring day, which after all was not to pass without an excitement and the smell of powder for some of us.

About five o'clock we heard a firing as of skirmishers that

sounded a long way in our rear, and in ten minutes thereafter we saw a dashing of orderlies hither and thither, one of which brought General Birney an order to move with his division in the direction of the firing at once. Dropping everything in hand, not stopping for blankets or to pick up what under other circumstances would have been taken, the division was, within half an hour of the time the first shot was noticed, on its way to the rear. Before we reached the Fredericksburg Road we saw a division from the 5th corps moving in the same direction, and knew that our trains were stampered from the rush of demoralized drivers and non-combatants that spread all over the open field over which our march was made. The increasing musketry told us that the stamper was not without cause, for it had grown from a skirmish fire to volleys. When very near the Fredericksburg Road we came to the spot where a regiment had unslung knapsacks and piled them on the ground. No sooner did our men catch sight of them than deploying at double-quick they swept over them, every one the possessor of a fine outfit belonging to some unfortunate heavy artilleryman. Then they "went through them" on the double-quick, until empty knapsacks strewed the ground in our rear, together with a large assortment of the same goods that the men in 1862 started out with, but which now as veterans they knew to be utterly worthless to them. Even "boiled shirts" had no attractions for the masses then. It was an awfully mean thing to do, I confess to-day, but *then* the men who did not enter into the sport must have been entirely without a desire for fun or mischief or devoid of any sense of the humorous. It was not without an excuse either, for many of those men had time and again left all their worldly possessions in some similar spot under similar circumstances and never had been able to reclaim them. So they argued, if we do not have these, somebody else will, or so they would have argued, and an answer to that in the form of a denial would have been useless.

It was not many minutes afterwards that we went through a strip of pines and passed through the line of Colonel Tannatt's brigade, formed halfway down an open slope at the foot of which was the river Ny. His men were standing there taking the fire of the concealed enemy on the opposite bank. Our line rushed to the brink and soon found cover, after which little more followed than a fitful firing when Tannatt had withdrawn to the cover of the wood. Then we put a picket line across the stream and lay there in the thick fog that rose all around us.

The divisions of General Crawford from the 5th and of General Russell from the 6th corps came also to Tyler's support. The former moved up the river in an attempt to get upon the flank of the attacking party, but neither of them was engaged.

The 1st Massachusetts and 5th Maine regiments of heavy artillery, forming a brigade under Colonel Tannatt of the Massachusetts regiment, bore the brunt of the attack. It commenced to skirmish as early as four o'clock P. M. with the enemy's advance, and very soon one battalion of the Massachusetts regiment was put in to their support, was quickly followed by the second, and then the whole of the Maine regiment advanced to their assistance. Besides these were three or four New York regiments, forming a brigade under Colonel Kitching of the 6th New York, which were of no more assistance than were the divisions from the other corps, for on their arrival the affair had been virtually decided. The Massachusetts regiment went into the action with 1600 officers and men, and its aggregate loss was 394. The Maine regiment, which in February had been recruited to the maximum (1800), lost 476 men. Our loss must have approximated to 1000 in this affair, which, in the midst of so many more bloody fights, is almost unknown. It is claimed that about 400 prisoners fell into our hands as one of the results. My notebook says over 400; and from the official report of the

2d brigade, 3d division, 2d corps, which advanced next morning across the Ny and thoroughly scoured the country, I find that it claims to have brought in 200.

General Grant in his dispatch says 300, but he also places his own losses at 750, when two regiments alone lost 120 more than that number.

We of the 2d corps were in the habit of calling this "the battle of the Heavies," and their losses, as well as the manner in which, under fire for the first time, they drove back veteran troops, tell all that can be told of their discipline and courage.

The attacking party on this day was General Ewell, who with his entire command crossed the Ny to strike our communications in the rear. That something more than a mere reconnoissance was intended may be inferred from the number of men who took part in it, as well as from its being committed to the hands of a corps commander. The prize to be reached, if he was successful in driving us from the Fredericksburg Road, was our entire wagon train, — with everything that implies, — which was parked in that vicinity for miles and filled the road besides. What the result might have been beyond the acquirement of so much property, it is useless to conjecture. That it was not left out of the account with them is shown by the "Narrative" of General Early, who says:¹ "General Ewell made a movement against the enemy's right, . . . while the whole corps (Hill's) was held in readiness to coöperate, should his attack prove successful." And General Anderson in his diary writes: "Towards evening Ewell undertakes a movement against the enemy's right, accomplishing, however, little save some information of the enemy's position." Owing to the nature of the country over which Ewell moved — a thickly wooded and marshy region, for the most part, — he was obliged to cross the river without his artillery; but General Hampton, who accompanied Ewell with his brigade of cavalry, had also a "battery of horse artillery," and these

¹ The Last Year of the War, etc. By Lieutenant-General J. A. Early, p. 27.

were the only guns heard in the fight. Hampton, making a more extended sweep than the infantry, being on their left, came upon the road farther down, and dashing along it carried consternation to the hearts of quartermasters, mule-drivers, and sutlers. But alas for the gallant Hampton! He was met by an element new in the Army of the Potomac, which was no other than a division of colored troops, under the command of General Ferrero, that, although belonging to the 9th corps, had not been put in to fight, but kept as a wagon guard. To them belongs the honor of repulsing the famous Hampton Legion.

Whatever may have been intended by this movement, it is certain that it interfered to postpone until the next night the plans of General Grant.

On the morning of the 20th, after it had been ascertained their presence was no longer needed, the three divisions sent to General Tyler's assistance were returned to their respective corps, and enjoyed another day of grateful rest before starting out by the left flank once more.

The order for the march of the 21st,¹ issued by General Meade to General Hancock, who with the 2d corps was to lead in the movement, fixed two o'clock A. M. as the hour for starting. After having reconnoitred the road as far as Guinea's Station, General Hancock obtained permission to start at eleven o'clock P. M. of the 20th, which gave three hours more for getting well under way before daylight. By one o'clock A. M. of the 21st the rear division of the corps (the 3d) was on the road, and the remainder of that night and the next day until five o'clock P. M. were spent in making a march of somewhat over twenty miles. The order was "To move to Bowling Green and Milford Station via Guinea's Station, and take position on the right bank of the Mattapony." This was complied with to the letter. The cavalry under General Torbert that preceded us had brushed away all the enemy's scouting parties from

¹ 67 W. R. 340, 362.

Guinea's and Downer's bridges (which were on our right flank after passing the station) across the Po Ny River, and leaving but a few vedettes to watch those crossings, the main force had passed through Bowling Green and arrived at Milford Station before meeting with resistance. There on the opposite side of the Mattapony, protected by rifle-pits, was a force which was probably a portion of Kemper's brigade of Pickett's division on its way from North Carolina to join General Lee. This was dislodged, and some fifty or more taken prisoners before the head of the 2d corps arrived. The bridge being saved and the passage of the river assured, Barlow crossed his divisions without experiencing any delay, moved a mile beyond to high land and a strong position, and was followed by the remainder of the corps as it came up, all throwing up the inevitable line of defense immediately.

The day was a warm and pleasant one, and our march, through a country as fresh and bright as any we had seen since our march into Pennsylvania the year before, was more like a picnic excursion than a trial of speed with our enemy. As usual the men managed to pick up something in the line of eatables, and to replenish their stock of tobacco, which to some was quite as necessary.

Excepting by our cavalry this region had but once been visited by any portion of our army. That was in May, 1862, by a part of King's division of General McDowell's corps, then occupying Fredericksburg. In it was my regiment, and I passed five days in and around Guinea's Station, riding back once in the mean while to Fredericksburg. No more pleasing region for campaigning purposes ever came in my line of march. The roads are good, water plenty, and there are farms enough for foraging purposes and fences enough for fuel. If the soldier asks for anything besides these requisites he has pleasing landscapes, extensive views, and houses planned on a grand scale dotting them here and there, but will miss everything that can remind him of his home.

Immediately following the 2d corps came the army headquarters train, which established a new camp at Guinea's Station in the Motley house, overlooking the river and region beyond. There a little affair occurred which has been called the "wagon train battle," which cannot be better described than in the words of an officer who witnessed it.¹

"That was May 21 at Guinea's Bridge (near which is the house where Stonewall Jackson died). The 2d corps had passed, and the 5th was coming along, and General Meade was riding between the two. Arrived at Motley's, we found our train, and the quartermaster looking very blank, for the enemy was on the other side of the river and might come over. Headquarters guard and some provisional militia were soon up. These were the 114th Pennsylvania (a zouave regiment of the old 3d corps), the Engineers, the 68th New York, and Adams's squadron of the 1st Massachusetts cavalry. General Meade gave orders to force the bridge at once. The 68th New York waded over and freed it, when Adams galloped across and chased the enemy, capturing three of them." That was all the big "wagon train battle."

The 5th corps coming up crossed at Guinea's Bridge, thus branching off to the right from the road taken by the 2d, and halted on the south bank of the Po Ny, the cavalry of the enemy hovering all around.

The orders issued for the 9th corps march were discretionary as to the route it should take after the 5th had moved. They were that it should cross the Po River at Stannard's Mill (Snell's Bridge) if it could be done without opposition, thus opening a direct road by which it would have been on the right of the 5th, and although marching later would have reached the first halting-point as soon as it did. In preparing to execute this plan the brigade of Colonel Curtin of General Potter's division was sent to the location indicated, and although meeting a scouting party a mile before reaching the

¹ Colonel Lyman.

river, had no difficulty in taking his force to the spot, from where he sent back word that the enemy was in force on the other side. General Potter hurried the balance of the division forward and made dispositions to cross; but fearing it might bring on an engagement, Burnside ordered the route via Downer's Bridge to be taken, and after an all-night march halted near Bethel Church (query, Bethesda).

The 6th corps, the rear of the army, was attacked before the 9th was entirely out of the way by two brigades from Anderson's¹ division, which came upon the front of General Russell's division by the road leading past the Gayle house. A brisk fight resulted, which occasioned so much noise (General Wright making good use of his batteries) that the division of Willcox was sent back by General Burnside to offer assistance, which was not needed as the enemy did not persist in the attack. This did not seriously delay the withdrawal of the 6th, which commenced as early as nine o'clock P. M. (21st) and was continued via Guinea's Bridge in the track of the 5th. Thus between midnight of the 20th and midnight of the 21st the whole army was withdrawn from Spottsylvania.

On the 22d the 2d corps was quiet, although I remember that Birney's division moved about a mile forward and built works that if not torn down must be there to-day. We were out of sight and sound of the enemy, and Colonel Egan with his brigade went to Polecat Run (or Station), finding but one forlorn cavalryman, who came back with them, probably without persuasion.

The 5th corps continued its march on roads whose general direction was west and south, skirmishing with the cavalry nearly all the way, crossing the Mat River, and camping about five miles west of the 2d corps. Before starting in the morning a brigade under Colonel Bates, from General Lockwood's division, was sent out at five o'clock on a road running due west, and driving the enemy's cavalry before it, attained as

¹ Wilcox's? See Va. Camp. 122. — Ed.

far as the Telegraph Road (to Mud Tavern?), where it learned that both the divisions of Anderson and Early had passed southward during the night. This probably was the first satisfactory information of the Confederate movement to checkmate us. Now Stannard's Mill, where the 9th corps was directed to cross, is not more than three miles from Mud Tavern, the point to which Colonel Bates pushed his reconnoissance. Whatever force was holding that ford was probably the rear guard of Anderson's column. Had a crossing been forced (as no doubt it might easily), General Burnside would have come upon Anderson, who moved from Spottsylvania at about the same time he did "via Dickerson's and Mud Tavern." The 9th, like the 2d corps, remained quiet this day, while the 6th did not make more than temporary halts from the time it left the line before Spottsylvania Court House until it camped in rear of the 5th, on the north bank of the Mat. By night of the 22d the army was disposed in the following order: The 2d corps near Milford Station, south of the Mattaponi, on the left flank; the 5th on the Telegraph Road, south of the Mat, on the right flank; supporting, on the same road, but on the north bank of the river, was the 6th, while the 9th was midway between the two flanks, also north of the river. Headquarters were in rear of the 9th corps.

The enemy seemed to be perfectly well informed of our intention, or perhaps it took no great sagacity to divine it. No sooner was the 2d corps on the road than Ewell was put in motion, and Anderson followed in the afternoon of the 21st as the 5th went after the 2d. These two marched "via Dickerson's to the Mud Tavern and thence down the Telegraph Road," halting at three o'clock A. M., after an all-night march, for two hours' rest, and by night of the 22d the whole of General Lee's army was on the North Anna. General Ewell proceeded to Hanover Junction and formed what was the right of the Confederate line, General Anderson formed on his

left, while General Hill, who with his corps had taken a road west of the Telegraph Road, came in, and formed the left of their line. They had also been reinforced by two brigades of Pickett's division (Corse and Kemper), and by the division of General Breckinridge from the Valley. These, it is said, with the brigade of Hoke, which joined them on the 21st from North Carolina, were all the reinforcements General Lee's army received between the Rapidan and Petersburg.

On the morning of the 23d General Grant set his whole army in motion at an hour which did not indicate any hurry to arrive at the point aimed at. The 2d corps did not start before five o'clock. My memorandum says six. The cavalry in front had to skirmish continually with that of the enemy, and our progress was halting and slow. Although the distance to the North Anna was not over eight miles in a straight line, the day was nearly wasted when the corps was in line of battle within half a mile of the bank ready to advance. General Birney's division was on the right, across the road to Chesterfield Bridge; General Gibbon's was on the left, extending to the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad, General Barlow between the two, General Tyler in rear of the right division. When at about five o'clock the line advanced, General Gibbon reached the river in his front with little opposition, while Birney's progress was somewhat delayed. The bridge in his front was defended by a small redoubt, flanked by rifle-pits, while on the farther bank of the river was another, which commanded not alone the crossing itself, but also the approach to it; while still more to the enemy's left were other works, occupied by artillery, which swept all the plain from far above to far below the bridge. The country was open for the entire length of the corps line, with a gradual rise to the river after crossing Long Creek, which is a stream of no consequence, a mere brook, that flows but a short distance farther before emptying into the North Anna. There was an excellent opportunity for using the artillery on both sides, which was improved

by some splendid practice, during which I remember one of the enemy's limbers was exploded in a battery that had been extremely annoying to us, and afterwards we heard no more from it. Birney pushed a brigade across Long Creek, and a section of Arnold's Rhode Island battery, commanded by Lieutenant Hunt, was taken under cover of a few trees quite within musketry range from the redoubt, and did good service in keeping down the fire while the assaulting column was being formed. This consisted of the First brigade, commanded by Colonel Egan of the 40th New York (who later earned the brevet of major-general for his gallantry at the battle of Boylston Road), and the Second under Colonel (afterwards Brigadier-General) Pierce of the 3d Michigan. Forming as they did under heavy fire, no time was wasted, and it was not quite seven o'clock when the order to advance was given. My notes say the affair was decided at quarter-past seven. The rush that followed across that open plain, a distance of nearly a quarter of a mile, was one of the sights that every one who saw will ever remember with a thrill of admiration, not only because of the success that resulted, but also because the occasion was a rare one when the forming of the column, the advance, and the capture of the position could all be seen. General Hancock was one of the enthusiastic lookers-on, and in his report says, "I have seldom witnessed such gallantry and spirit as the brigades of Pierce and Egan displayed."

A terrific fire both of musketry and artillery showered upon this advancing line seemed to have only the effect to cause the right wing to oblique to the right. There was an interval between the two brigades at the start which was somewhat opened by this, but the left flank of the right brigade struck the redoubt and went over it almost before we who were looking on knew it, and then the entire brigade closed in towards the left and joined the other at the bridge head, scooping in a score of prisoners. The safety of the bridge was also insured, although there were repeated and perpetual efforts made many

times in the night to destroy it. Below us at the railroad bridge the enemy was successful in his attempt and gave us a blaze that lasted for an hour.

The 5th corps reached the river at Jericho Ford, a point that in a straight line is between three and four miles from the Chesterfield Bridge, at about one o'clock, and finding not even a picket to give warning of its approach commenced to cross without delay, and brought up pontoons and laid a bridge. The division of General Griffin was leading, that of General Cutler followed and formed on the right, that of General Crawford on the left, and the advance once more commenced, but for the most part through woods with an occasional clearing. It was not long before the skirmishers of the enemy were encountered. Pushing them back until a suitable ground was selected on which to form a line, the corps began to intrench; but this work was but just organized when the centre of the line was vigorously set upon and for a time forced back, but finally reestablished itself. Turning from the centre, the South Carolina brigade in command of General Brown moved to our right along the Virginia Central Railroad, and fell upon the flank of General Cutler's division, unexpectedly to both sides evidently, for there was much disorder on both sides, which resulted in the Carolinians being put to flight, leaving General Brown and between 400 and 500 of the rank and file in our hands. Warren was thus left in a secure position, with both flanks on the river, which makes a curve there, and the 6th corps across the river in his rear.

The 9th corps, when it moved on this day (23d), made its way "over plantation roads between the routes taken by the 2d and 5th." Its orders were to march on Jericho Ford, but subsequently a change in them directed the head of column to Ox Ford, where a brigade under General Mott represented the right flank of the 2d corps. Ox Ford is a mile from the Chesterfield Bridge, in a direct line. General Willcox, with

his division, relieved the brigade which had been observing the ford.

This night the army was disposed in the following order: The 5th corps on the right, south of the North Anna River; the 2d on the left, on the north bank, with the 6th and 9th lying between the two, about a mile from the river. Army headquarters was in rear of the 9th corps. General Grant in his dispatch of this date said of the attack on Warren's front, "I have never heard more rapid or massive firing either of artillery or musketry." He also gives the number of prisoners captured as "not far short of 1000." Warren's loss he puts at not over "300 killed and wounded." This affair is said to have been the occasion of a letter of thanks from General Meade to the 5th corps.

The operations of the 24th developed the new line of the Confederates and caused General Grant to write afterwards, "The enemy's position is stronger than either of his previous ones." General Hancock lined the river-bank along his front with batteries, and the dueling was even hotter than the day before. The sharpshooters kept the opposite bank clear, and pontoons were laid on General Gibbon's front over which he commenced to pass by eight o'clock, and an hour later General Birney's command was crossing on the Chesterfield Bridge. Tyler's division was left on the north side. Barlow's crossed after Gibbon and formed on Birney's left. General Potter's division was sent from the 9th corps during the day, and was placed on the extreme right of the 2d, under expectation probably that it would connect with General Willcox, who was ordered to cross at Ox Ford. But though the left of the 2d corps swung out until it was three quarters of a mile from the river, the right, although it extended up the river nearly half a mile, above the bridge was compelled to hug the bank. All along the front our line was carried quite close up to the enemy's works, and the firing during the day was incessant. Towards evening a heavy attack was made on the front of

General Gibbon, which fell principally upon the brigade commanded by Colonel Smythe. On the right the 6th corps crossed early in the morning, and forming on the right of the 5th, advanced and extended the line until it ran from the river at a point a mile above Ox Ford to and across the Virginia Central Railroad, in a southwest direction, nearly to the Little River, before reaching which it was sharply refused, in a line parallel to the railroad. In his advance General Warren was obliged to cling to the river-bank as General Hancock had done, and most of his fighting during the day was on this left flank, while on the right the men destroyed the railroad for amusement. A regiment from General Crawford's division, the 1st Pennsylvania reserves, sent down the bank of the river in advance of the main line, to communicate, if possible, with the 9th corps, was completely cut off and hemmed in at Quarles Ford; and when the whole division, hearing the firing, advanced to the relief, it was cut off from the corps. Communication, however, was opened across the river with General Crittenden's division that had been ordered to that place to cross and move down in order to uncover Ox Ford, and it came over and made a gallant attack, passing through the division of General Crawford, who was thus enabled to form connection with his own corps, already advancing towards him. It was found impossible to uncover the Ox Ford, however, and General Crittenden was ordered to report to General Warren, who placed him on the left of the line, thus leaving General Burnside with one division (Willcox) under his command on the north bank of the river. The most that division had been able to accomplish during the day was to occupy a small island in the river on his front.

There was a tremendous thunder-shower in the afternoon, followed by another on the next day (25th), and a heavy rain in the forenoon of the 26th, the first we had had since the 13th.

The enemy's line as developed by these operations was found

to rest on the river at Ox Ford, with the left thrown back at a right angle to it and extending to Little River, while the right ran in a nearly southeast direction across the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad and around Hanover Junction, and was protected there by almost impassable marshes or swamp. It was at once evident that our army was hopelessly cut in twain, and a forward movement in that direction came to an end.

After abandoning the base at Fredericksburg, a new one was opened at Port Royal, and within a day or two after this changed to the White house.

On this day the order was issued that incorporated the 9th corps with the Army of the Potomac. The reason why this had not been done earlier was because General Burnside ranked General Meade, as in fact did also General Parke, the chief of the 9th corps staff, but it had been found impracticable to have a corps, that to all intents and purposes was one with the Army of the Potomac, not subject to the commander of that army. General Burnside, with that generosity which is so marked a characteristic, waived the question of rank (as did also General Parke) and continued in the command.

Colonel Venable writes, "In the midst of these operations on the North Anna, General Lee was taken sick and confined to his tent. As he lay prostrated by sickness, he would often repeat, 'We must strike them a blow; we must never let them pass us again—we must strike them a blow.' But though he still had reports of the operations on the field constantly brought to him and gave orders to his officers, Lee confined to his tent was not Lee on the battle-field. I cannot refrain from expressing the opinion that, had not General Lee been physically disabled, he would have inflicted a heavy blow on the enemy on his march from the Pamunkey to the Chickahominy."¹

¹ So. Hist. Soc. xiv, 535.

Knowing to-day how perilous a position our army occupied and that this was the best opportunity that ever presented itself to General Lee to attack with the hope of doing us serious damage, the foregoing sounds much like an apology for his failure to seize what chance had arranged for him. It to my mind is far more satisfactory to think that, while knowing the opportunity, he knew also that, with all the odds in his favor, he could not risk there, within fifteen miles of Richmond, even one chance in a thousand of being defeated. To act on the defensive was his only hope.

On the 25th and 26th we rested, "so to speak." Not but that there was skirmishing, artillery practice, intrenching, and the destruction of railroads, even as far in our rear as to Milford Station. Yet to many it seemed like rest. Certainly it did to me, if I may be permitted to quote from the longest letter written during the month. "I am sitting on my blankets, with the river before me, the redoubt we took and works we threw up on the other side in plain sight. Behind us is the enemy, and to my left the redoubt he built to protect the bridge from this side. Away to my left are the remains of the railroad. I am shaded by an immense tulip-tree in full bloom, and need go but half a dozen yards to pick magnolias. A band is playing near by, while not much farther away a battery is practicing on something that has just attracted attention, and out at the front—which is nearer a quarter than half a mile off—there is a continual popping of muskets. You cannot imagine that we have pleasure and danger, comfort and hardships so near together, or so strangely mixed. The weather is warm, but we find plenty of ice, and occasionally console ourselves with milk-punches and mint-juleps."

The night of the 26th saw us once more on the march. About nine o'clock the 2d corps began to withdraw across the river, halting after putting perhaps a mile twist it and us, leaving a party to destroy the bridge. The other corps executed the same movement at the same time. The 6th, which

was the first to withdraw on the right, continued its march to the north until Chesterfield Station was struck, thence to the right down the river. General Russell's division was in the advance, following close upon the heels of the cavalry, and by ten o'clock A. M. of the 27th had reached the Pamunkey at Hundley's Ford (or Nelson's, as it is better known, although the first is the name given it by General Meade in his report), and secured a crossing. The 5th corps followed the same path and halted at Mangohick Church. The 9th halted, keeping company with the 2d, while General Crittenden with a brigade at Jacob's, Quarles, and Ox fords remained until all the troops were withdrawn and the bridges taken up. It was morning before the 2d corps moved, and midnight when it halted within a few miles of the Pamunkey on the left of the 5th corps. The 9th followed during the afternoon, coming up in rear of the 5th, and the two continued down the Pamunkey to Hanover Town, where both crossed on the 28th, excepting, however, the division of General Willcox left at the fords, which did not come up until past midnight of the 29th. The 2d followed the 6th across the Hundley Ford (or Nelson's) and formed on its left; the 9th came up on the left of the 2d and then joined its left to the 5th. The left of our line was opposite Hawes's Shop (or Salem Church).

It has been stated (the authority is unknown) that the original plan of this movement contemplated the passage of the Pamunkey by the 6th and 2d corps at Hanover, and the 5th and 9th at Newcastle, which is about a mile below in a straight line, but which would have necessitated a march of several miles more. If this is true, the mistake that it is alleged was made in the order to General "Baldy" Smith, who joined us from the Army of the James, directing his march upon the road to Newcastle, instead of New Cold Harbor, may not have been a mistake after all.

On the 29th reconnoissances in force were pushed out from each of the corps save the 9th. On the right General Russell

moved to Hanover Court House, and his 4th brigade was advanced to Peake's Turnout on the Virginia Central Railroad, which with the buildings was destroyed and a large amount of corn brought away. He rejoined the command at Phillips's Mill on the night of the 31st. General Barlow moved in a westerly direction towards a road running from Hanover Court House to Cold Harbor, found the enemy near Gentry's, and drove them to their works on Swift Creek, a branch of the Totopotomoy. Word being sent to General Hancock that the enemy was in force, he moved his other divisions to the vicinity and placed that of General Gibbon on the right and Birney on the left of General Barlow. General Griffin from the 5th corps marched southward toward Bethesda Church. By night the entire line had advanced, the 6th closing in on the right of the 2d and the 5th on the left, the 9th being in rear. Headquarters were at Hawes's Shop. To-day General Tyler's division (the 4th of the 2d corps) was discontinued, and the 1st Massachusetts and 1st Maine regiments of heavy artillery were assigned to the 3d division, and Kitching's brigade to the 5th corps (General Crawford's division). The fight of the 19th at the Harris house had endeared the men of these two regiments to the men who wore the diamond "patch," and they received them into full fellowship, counting them by the time they arrived before Petersburg as 3d corps men ("as we understand it"), in proof of which their officers were admitted to membership in "The Third Army Corps Union," a mutual relief society that had been formed the previous autumn at Brandy Station.

On the 30th, General Warren, who already had a part of his command across, moved over the Totopotomoy, and the 9th corps was ordered up to fill the gap. There was the same desultory fighting, so hard to characterize, in which artillery participated. My notes merely mention being "out nearly all day on the right with a reconnoissance that determined our

new line." Late in the afternoon an attack was made on the 5th corps that threatened to envelop its flank and resulted in severe fighting, chiefly borne by the division of General Crawford, which had attempted to gain possession of the Mechanicsville Road. The advance brigade under Colonel Hardin was driven back upon the rest of the division, which secured a good position and was reinforced by the brigade of Colonel Kitching and artillery. The enemy attacked three times, according to most statements, and upon being repulsed the last time the brigade of Pennsylvania reserves advanced and captured seventy prisoners. One colonel, five line officers, and 300 killed and wounded were left on the field by the enemy. This engagement is noteworthy as the last fight in which the Reserves participated. On the next day their term of service expired. Two thousand men of the ten who two years before fought at Mechanicsville, scarce five miles away, ended their service with the same heroism that had been accorded them since the beginning of their career.

The enemy making this attack was of Ewell's corps, and it is mentioned in the narrative of Early as follows:¹ "On the afternoon of the 30th I moved to the right across Beaver Dam to the road from Old Church to Mechanicsville, thence along that road towards Old Church until we reached Bethesda Church. At this point the enemy was encountered and his troops which occupied the road were driven by Rodes's division towards the road from Hundley's Corner, which unites with the road from Mechanicsville east of Bethesda Church. Pegram's brigade, under the command of Colonel Edward Willis of the 12th Georgia regiment, was sent forward with one of Rodes's brigades on its right to feel the enemy and ascertain its strength; but meeting with a heavy force behind breastworks, it was compelled to retire with the loss of some valuable officers and men, and among them were Colonel Willis, 12th Georgia, mortally wounded; Colonel

¹ Last Year of the War, by Lieutenant-General Jubal A. Early, 1867, p. 30.

Terrell, 13th Virginia, and Lieutenant-Colonel Watkins, 52d Virginia, killed."

While this fighting was in progress General Hancock was directed to attack, to relieve the pressure on the 5th corps, and a brigade from General Barlow's division was sent out which drove the enemy's skirmish line back to his works.

At night our line had so closed towards the left that the 2d corps, the right centre, was partly across the Totopotomoy, while the 9th and 5th were both over, extending to Bethesda Church.

On the 31st, the same general operations were repeated. In the 2d corps front General Birney crossed Swift Run and drove the enemy out of his first line, remained there during the day, and withdrew at midnight. This was the most important movement on the line during the day, which was a very hot one and memorable to many because of the absence of eatables, which extended to division headquarters. An officer told me his men had been on roast corn diet for over twenty-four hours, and he knew what it was to suffer the pangs of hunger for the first time in his life.

Cohorn mortars were used here for the first time. During the night of May 31 and June 1, the 6th corps was withdrawn from the right and moved to Cold Harbor, and at midnight of June 1 the 2d followed. It was a hot and dusty night. An officer sent by General Meade to guide the column, in his eagerness to have us comply with the order which enjoined "every exertion to reach Cold Harbor as soon as possible," tried to take us a short cut through a woods road, the result of which was that the artillery came to a standstill, the column was broken up, and it took the entire night, or what remained of it, to remedy the evil, which prevented our arriving at Cold Harbor before noon of June 2.

We went into position on the left, and thus completed the formation in which substantially the battles of Cold Harbor were fought, as follows: 2d corps on the left, next the 6th,

then the divisions of General Smith from the Army of the James, then the 5th and the 9th. Army headquarters moved to Cold Harbor.

It is not in my power to offer any criticism on these movements. Whatever I might say would be but the opinions of others, just as their statements of facts have been used to make up my own account of them. But I do not feel any hesitation in putting upon record my opinion of the morale of the army. This opinion is one that to my knowledge has never been contradicted except by inference, and it is that never were the men more hopeful or in better spirits, more willing for marching, more ready to fight, than at this time. Swinton, after narrating the battles around Spottsylvania, says: "The exhausted army began to lose its spirit." But to Swinton's opinion, expressed as this is, no weight can be attached; and if one is inclined to accept it, I might quote the words of Coppée,¹ who of a little later date says: "The troops were in capital spirits, most anxious to be led against the enemy." Of course my opinions, formed at the time, are from contact with a very small fraction of the army, and yet that does not to me invalidate them. If you should be inclined to differ from me here, let me remind you that the fraction to which it was my fortune to be connected is that part which has been accused of bad behavior on more than one occasion, — the only part of that army whose record stands impeached in the writings of this Society, — and for them I claim, what I concede to every other brigade of every other corps, that they fought readily, and marched willingly upon every occasion. If non-success in attack had a tendency to dampen their ardor, the continual movements by the flank were an antidote for it, having none of the dispiriting effects that a retreat would have had. There was an idea that we were still advancing, that there was a plan that would be carried

¹ Grant and his Campaigns, by Henry Coppée, 1866, p. 335.

out successfully. If there was less alacrity in rushing upon intrenchments, it was because the men saw at once what were their chances of success and went only so far as they saw them in their favor. By the time we reached Cold Harbor we began to be wary of them, finding them across every road we took, and were in the condition which General Hancock described when he said: "They went as far as the example of their officers would carry them." When we reached the North Anna I think the general feeling was that we should roll on, like a wave, up to the very gates of Richmond. With *that* feeling all the fighting was done which pushed the enemy into his breastworks. When we saw *them* before us we halted, and I very much doubt if an assault ordered upon them would have been anything more than a demonstration. If charges of misconduct are brought against the army as a whole, or any part of it, it is but fair to consider all extenuating circumstances, and these were many.

While not allowing they are needed, let me mention one or two. One element that tended to a certain degree of laxity in discipline and a disinclination to exposure to danger was the presence of men whose term of service was to expire in a few days or weeks. In May already some began to be withdrawn from the oldest regiments and mustered out, and the numbers increased every week. To say that these men, with their homes almost in sight, were less ready to face danger than usual is to impugn no man's courage.

Another element was the loss of trusted because well-known leaders. Brigades commanded by colonels, regiments by captains, companies by sergeants, were not uncommon all through the army. Here are the casualties on the 5th and 6th of May in one brigade: the commander killed, four colonels severely wounded, two lieutenant-colonels wounded (one mortally), one major taken prisoner. These were all in command of regiments. You will remember many of these small regiments, if they had two field officers, had all

they were allowed, hence captains in command were common. There were cases in which an officer was detailed from one of the more fortunate regiments to the command that had thus devolved upon a captain, but we question if it improved its condition much.

My position of mustering officer brought me into more contact with the line officers than if I had performed other duty. They came to me at all hours of the day and night to be mustered, and my testimony must stand in favor of their universally cheerful and hopeful dispositions.

It was easy for a newspaper correspondent to say that such and such troops behaved badly, or to say that the army was dispirited, to account for a failure or to turn a sentence; but let us, who are trying to write the whole truth and nothing but the truth, not repeat any such statements without weighing all the facts and summing up all the excuses that may be urged in their favor. Even if we cannot find them, let us turn to the record of their services before and after the time, and judge by them what their conduct on any occasion was likely to have been.

XIII

THE BATTLE OF COLD HARBOR

BY

CAPTAIN CHARLES H. PORTER

39TH MASSACHUSETTS INFANTRY, U. S. V.

Read before the Society December 12, 1881

THE BATTLE OF COLD HARBOR

LET us consider for a few moments the movements which resulted in this battle, the last one fought north of the James in that tremendous campaign of 1864.

The operations at the North Anna, brilliant as was the work of Warren at Jericho Ford and of Hancock at Chesterfield Bridge, only served, when pushed, to develop a magnificent position held by General Lee's army, directly across the advance of General Grant. Lee's lines were well manned. They occupied a fine defensive position, and for field works were exceedingly well constructed. Certainly, those in front of the 5th corps were as good as troops could wish.

There was but one course to pursue, and that was to turn them by a flanking march, either by the right or left. The march by the left was made.

On the 22d of May General Grant, having determined that General Butler had too many men at Bermuda Hundred to be used to any advantage behind the lines he had so carefully constructed, ordered him to dispatch reinforcements to the Army of the Potomac by way of White House on the Pamunkey River. In accordance with these instructions, detachments from the two corps of Butler's army (the 10th and 18th) were organized under the command of General W. F. Smith, put on transports, and sent to White House Landing. They arrived on the 30th of May. There were in all about 16,000 men in this movement, and they were organized in four divisions. One division was left at the landing to hold the place, and the three remaining divisions, under the command of Generals Devens, Martindale, and Brooks, advanced to Old Cold Harbor, and reported to General Meade. These troops are known in the reports as the 18th corps.

The 9th corps, which had been under the direct command of General Grant, was on the 24th of May joined to the command of General Meade, and for the first time the movements about to be made were executed under orders from one headquarters. The delay in assigning the 9th corps to Meade is generally supposed to have been caused by the desire of Grant not to have Burnside serve under his junior in rank, Meade.

The successes at the North Anna River, though small in themselves as affecting the campaign, had nevertheless given the troops a great deal of confidence. The repulse, without much loss, by Griffin and Cutler of the determined assaults of Heth and Wilcox, served to give the new troops which had joined the 5th corps much vigor, and the gallant assault at Chesterfield Bridge was of like valuable service to the 2d corps, and when the army took up its march on the 25th and 26th of May it was in excellent condition and temper. At no time did the troops make better marches than these to be now related, and the morale was higher than at any time after May 10 and 12 at Spottsylvania. Grant made a feint to the right with Wilson's cavalry on May 25, under cover of which the 6th corps, which occupied the extreme right of our lines, was withdrawn, and massed on the northerly bank of the river. Lee, who was on the alert, reported to the authorities at Richmond that it was the beginning of a movement by his (Lee's) left.

On the afternoon of the 26th of May, General Sheridan, with the divisions of Torbert and Gregg, was ordered to advance on Hanover Town, on the southwesterly side of the Pamunkey River. Torbert was first to touch the Pamunkey at Taylor's Ford, and make a demonstration of crossing there. Gregg, with his division, was to occupy Littlepage's Ford, and demonstrate in the same way. At nightfall both were to retire with the larger portion of their troops, but leaving a small force from each division to continue the demonstrations, while

the main army was to reach the Pamunkey opposite Hanover Town, and at this point make the real crossing. Russell's division of the 6th corps was the infantry support to this manoeuvre of the cavalry.

On the morning of the 27th the leading brigade of Torbert's division crossed the Pamunkey at Hanover Town and quickly drove the enemy's cavalry from the town, driving it in a northwesterly direction to Crump's Creek, where Gregg, who had now come up, formed in line with Torbert. Russell's division followed quickly, and was soon on the southerly bank of the river. The remaining divisions of the 6th corps were moved on a road following the Pamunkey. The 2d corps marched directly in rear of the 6th. A greater detour was made by the 5th corps, its march being by the Mangohick Church and McDowell's Mills road. The 9th corps followed the 5th. Wilson, with his cavalry division, covered the rear, and also the trains which were soon on the road to the new base of supplies to be established at White House, the depot at Port Royal having been given up.

On the 28th the entire army was across, or well up to, the river. The other two divisions of the 6th corps, as also the 2d corps, crossed the Pamunkey at a point between where Crump's Creek empties into it and Hanover Town.¹ The 5th corps crossed at Hanover Town; the 9th, however, remained on the northerly bank. A line of battle was formed about a mile and a half from the river, the 6th corps being on the right, the 2d in the centre, and the 5th on the left; the 9th being, as it were, in reserve, in the position above stated. The line was about three miles long, and extended from the Jones farm on the right to the Dunn house on the left, which was within about half a mile of Hawes's Store. Sheridan's cavalry was thrown out on the left flank nearly to Hawes's Store.

General Lee had been prompt to discover this turning movement. He withdrew his army to Ashland Station on the

¹ Hundley Ferry.

Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad, where he had it well in hand to meet any advance that might be made, ready also to strike a serious blow, should any mistake be made in the tactical movements that Meade seemed likely to undertake.

The country about the Pamunkey River is fairly open, though in some places the pine-trees and shrub undergrowth make it impossible to handle troops with success. From Hawes's Store three good roads run directly to Richmond, — one via Meadow Bridge, at which point it crosses the Chickahominy just to the west of the Virginia Central Railroad crossing; another via Cold Harbor, crossing the Chickahominy at New Bridge; while the middle road, which crosses the Chickahominy at Mechanicsville, is known as the Mechanicsville Turnpike, or the Old Church Road. It was of great importance that the position at Hawes's Store should be in our possession. With this in our lines, a country road which intersects the three roads before mentioned, which start from the store, would give us the power of advancing by either of them. As is well known, Sheridan made a brilliant fight here, and succeeded in driving out the enemy and giving us possession of this important point.

General Lee, after massing his army at Ashland, retreated to Atlee's Station, from which point he pushed out his lines to meet any advance that Grant might make, correctly divining that his old foe was massed behind the Totopotomoy Creek.

On the 29th of May the attempt was made to develop the enemy. The 6th corps was pushed quite up to Hanover Court House. The 2d and 5th corps advanced almost directly to the front, nearly to the creek. The 9th corps now moved across the river and was put into line between the 2d and 5th corps. The skirmishing was very lively; no engagement was actually brought about, but the enemy was developed in strength, well in hand, and intrenched.

May 30. The 6th corps was recalled from Hanover Court House and placed on the right of Hancock, and the grand

advance, or reconnoissance in force, was continued. Four corps in line of battle, with contracted fronts, well supported, advanced on the enemy. It was determined to extend our lines to the left, and Hancock reached the creek. Burnside was on his left, across the creek, with Wright holding the extreme right of the line. Warren was on the extreme left, moving up the Shady Grove Church Road and the Mechanicsville Turnpike. With the usual good fortune this advance was successful in every particular with this exception, that General Crawford's division (3d in the 5th corps) was thrown into considerable confusion by a rapid attack by Rodes, of Early's corps. The enemy, successful at first, was happily repulsed by the arrival of reinforcements, which restored our line, and the lost connection was regained without great disturbance.

The enemy were particularly vigilant and active, taking advantage of all flanks that were in the air. Determined not to hazard a general engagement, Lee was sure to observe all defective formations, and to take prompt action in every case. However, we were not entirely the losers by these manœuvres of the enemy, for Meade, upon being informed that Lee was in great force in Warren's front, directed a general assault. Hancock received the order in season and made a bold and rapid advance on the enemy's lines, capturing their rifle-pits and causing them to fall back in some confusion. Our line at this point was over nine miles long, extending from the Tinsley farm on the right to Bethesda Church on the left. Thus slowly but surely our lines were being extended to the left. General Lee was always on hand and met these thrusts of Meade with great skill, and parried them without difficulty.

General Lee, when at Ashland, had the choice of resisting this advance either in the rear of the Chickahominy, — using that river with its swamps for his outposts, and the fine high positions to the rear for his line, — or of fighting in front of it. He did not hesitate. Determined to defend Richmond, he met the enemy at once, and interposed his army between that city

and our forces in advance of the river. He was undoubtedly governed to a great extent by political reasons, but also by the very cogent one that Grant would feel very much elated indeed, could he put his advance within five miles of Richmond, and that the Federal troops would feel the greater inspiration from the nearness of their Mecca. It was also quite clear that the position north of the Chickahominy commanded more roads, and that its possession would necessitate greater detours, if a turning march were again to be made. The die was cast, and the grand battle was to be on the north bank. It is quite surprising that Lee, having determined that he would fight right here, did not at once possess himself of the great strategic point in this military territory. I mean Old Cold Harbor. A glance at the map will show its importance. To Grant it was of great moment that it should be in his possession, as it covered the advance of Smith from White House. With Cold Harbor in the possession of Lee, our base was greatly in danger, and the trains would be in danger of interruption. The crossing of the James, afterwards determined upon, would have to be made much further down the river than was actually done. That Lee knew all about this country goes without saying. It would be the height of absurdity to accuse him, who made the brilliant campaign of 1862 against McClellan, of ignorance of the great strategic value of Old Cold Harbor. That he did occupy it is true, but with so terribly small a force that it was quickly brushed away when Grant wished to secure it.

We left General W. F. Smith at White House Landing. General Grant was informed of his arrival, and at once ordered him to report to General Meade. He was to march up the south bank of the Pamunkey, and was especially cautioned to look out for any force that Lee might interpose to prevent his making the connection desired. In closing his dispatch to him, Grant said that he would like nothing better than to have Lee send a body of troops to prevent

his advance, as he felt that Lee was so closely observed by Meade that a break in his lines could be made should the force be sent.

On the 30th of May the position of the army was as follows : Warren on the left, at or near Bethesda Church, nearly three miles south of Totopotomoy Creek, then Burnside, Hancock, Wright. The right was about six miles from Hanover Court House. Lee was in position with his right thrown forward to the vicinity of Cold Harbor, though not at that point ; Hill on the right, Ewell in the centre, Anderson on the left. The left rested in advance of Atlee's Station. On the 31st of May Sheridan was ordered to advance with two divisions of cavalry, Torbert's and Gregg's, and to occupy Old Cold Harbor. At once pushing on his force, he reached the place and found it occupied by a slight force of cavalry and infantry. He assaulted at once and with success, driving out the cavalry force under Fitz Lee, and occupying the lines. By this time Lee evidently was well aware of the necessity of holding this position. He determined to reinforce the cavalry with infantry and drive Sheridan off. For this purpose he sent Hoke's division, which had been brought up from Petersburg, as a reinforcement to assist in driving Sheridan from the position. The attempt was made by Hoke, but without success. Upon information being given to General Grant that we were in possession of Old Cold Harbor, Sheridan was ordered by him to hold it at all hazards, and, to make sure of it, Grant ordered General Meade to detach General Wright with the 6th corps from the right, and move it to the left, and occupy and hold Old Cold Harbor. Sheridan reported that the enemy was very active in his front, and that infantry was being used, and that he felt unable to hold his line. Word was dispatched that it must be held at all hazards, and held it was.

General Lee quickly discovered that the 6th corps was withdrawn from our extreme right, and instantly divining

the purpose of this, immediately ordered Longstreet's corps (in command of Anderson) over to his extreme right. Of course this was a race. The dust made by the moving columns and the skirmishers on duty observing the same gave ample warning to General Grant that Lee was now bent on regaining Cold Harbor. Wright was hurried up; and just as McLaws had formed his men for the grand assault which was to give Lee possession of this valuable point, the heads of Wright's column came into line, relieving the cavalry, and our possession was secure. It had been hoped that General Wright would arrive at daybreak, but it was quite 9 A. M. when he came up and our force was content with holding in a firm grasp so important a prize until later in the day, when an assault was made. The position at this time was such that Wright was not in close connection with the rest of the army, but was quite isolated, and to reinforce him General Smith was ordered to move to Old Cold Harbor.

A singular accident prevented Smith from being in position at an early hour. The order was written by a staff officer at Grant's headquarters, and directed Smith to move to Newcastle on the Pamunkey. In order to execute this movement he had to go off from the road he was on, and march directly away from the field. He was informed that the 5th and 6th corps would be at the point designated. To his surprise on reaching the town no troops were near there. Smith discovered the mistake, and sent for instructions; but before his messenger returned, a staff officer from Grant's headquarters arrived and informed him that Old Cold Harbor was the point intended in his instructions. The staff officer had made a mistake. The line of march was resumed, this time to the proper point. The day was quite warm, the roads dusty, and the troops, being somewhat unused to marching, were greatly fatigued, and their ranks were quite thin. One division had been left at White House; and the force, now estimated at about 10,000 men, did not reach their place

between Wright and Warren until about 3 P. M., after a march of more than twenty-five miles.

General Lee had extended his line as before mentioned, and Hoke held the extreme right, Anderson (Longstreet) in close connection with him.

Having determined to push the enemy back from their front, the two corps (the 6th and the 18th) were formed in line of battle as follows: In the 6th corps Ricketts held the right, Russell the centre, and Neill the left; in the 18th corps, Martindale held the right, W. H. T. Brooks the centre, and Devens the left. The two corps extended from near the Woody house on the right to Old Cold Harbor on the left. The troops were to advance over an open field from three hundred to twelve hundred yards in width, on the farther side of which was the Confederate line in thick woods. The slope was very gentle from the woods down to our line. The attack, which was made about five o'clock in the afternoon of the 1st of June, was very spirited, and met with considerable success. The enemy were driven from the slight works which had been erected by them, and the separation of Hoke and Anderson gave us an opportunity which was quickly improved, 500 prisoners being captured by Wright. Smith met with a like success, capturing the works and 250 prisoners, and driving the enemy through the woods into and over a second clearing, but was repulsed when he tried to carry their second line, and was obliged to fall back to the position which he had just captured. He now tried to find the left of the 5th corps, but was not successful. Wright too had essayed to carry the second line of the enemy, but without success. As our lines were now arranged, Wright was on the extreme left, then Smith, Warren (there was quite a gap between Smith and Warren), Burnside, and Hancock. Sheridan was on the extreme left with two divisions. The fighting for the possession of Cold Harbor was severe and desperate, but resulted in complete success. This important position, so vital

to us, was secure, the road across the Peninsula was under our control, and the new base at White House was safely guarded.

Lee, in order to distract the attention of Grant from his left, savagely pushed out Ewell's and Hill's corps against the 5th, 9th, and 2d corps, and the advance was quite bold and dashing, but very unsuccessful. The enemy were easily and quickly repulsed. The most aggressive demonstration was made against Griffin, who commanded the 1st division of the 5th corps, who was on the Mechanicsville Pike, and for a little time it promised success; but the troops resisted with great firmness the advance of the Confederates and finally drove them back. Our losses on this day were quite 2000 men, principally in the 6th and 18th corps. As severe as it was, it was well worth the cost. Further to strengthen and extend the left, Hancock was ordered on the night of June 1 to move to the left and occupy the ground between the 6th corps and the Chickahominy. After an exhaustive march of all night, in which one of his divisions went astray, he reached Old Cold Harbor about 6.30 A. M., having made the twelve miles in about ten hours. He had been ordered with Wright and Smith to attack at daybreak, a feat that was wholly impossible. Any one familiar with the thoroughly demoralizing effects of a night march is quite well aware of the absolute necessity to the troops of rest in the morning. It is far better to feed the men, allow them to have a good meal, than to hurry them into an engagement. The attack was wisely abandoned until the afternoon. Sheridan, meanwhile, extended his position towards Bottom's Bridge.

The attack by Hancock, deferred from daylight, was ordered at 4 P. M. But Hancock was so earnest in opposition to it, urging the weary condition of the men as an argument against its success, and furthermore that he was barely in position, that Meade countermanded the order.

On the afternoon of this day, June 2, it was determined

that the 5th corps should extend its line to the left and connect with the 18th. At the same time Burnside was to be withdrawn from the right, and to occupy the line of the Mechanicsville Turnpike, facing north and east, thus refusing our right flank along the road somewhat in advance of the Bethesda Church. The movement was well begun and in course of successful execution, when the Confederates rushed on the 9th corps and swept away the extreme right flank of the 5th. Our lines were so close that no movements by any body of troops could be made on either side without being quickly discovered ; and when Burnside withdrew from Hill's front, that active soldier at once advanced in force to hold him or make him fight. The result was quite a severe battle in which the 9th corps was rather roughly handled ; and so impetuous was the advance of the enemy, that at one time it looked as though they would be able to sweep right into our rear and cause an immense amount of confusion and disorder. The enemy were bravely and at last successfully met. Their advance was stayed, and Burnside was able to occupy the position to which he had been ordered. They captured considerable of the telegraph wire and killed some of the telegraph men.

The losses in the 5th corps were due to the fact that under the pressure from the enemy the division of the 9th corps, which was to have pivoted upon the right flank of the 5th, was in the confusion driven back, and therefore the flank was entirely in the air. This was not known to our men, and one can well imagine the suddenness and alarm with which Ayres's brigade learned from a staff officer that the troops must be rapidly gathered together, faced to the rear, and marched obliquely to the right. The movement was hurried in a great degree by the sudden appearance of the enemy, and the confusion incident upon such appearance did not mend matters at all. Many quite forgot the direction to be taken, and marched directly into the enemy's lines. Quite 500

prisoners fell into their hands. The extension by the left was stopped, and the troops (part of Cutler's division) which were making the movement were hastily pushed in to relieve the right flank. Order was soon restored, and quiet reigned along our lines.

General Grant was quite provoked over the results of this attack, and told Meade that, while he was not generally in favor of night attacks, the enemy had put himself in such a position as to render one quite justifiable. It was, however, not made.

Wilson, who had been off destroying the railways, had now returned, and was put on the right of Burnside. Our line as now made up was as follows: Hancock held the left, Barlow's division being on the extreme left resting on what is known as Elder Swamp, in advance of the Lisby house; Gibbon was next in line to the right, extending from near McGee's house to near Old Cold Harbor, Birney being in reserve; then came Wright extending from Old Cold Harbor to the front of the Kelly and Stewart houses; Smith came next, extending from near Stewart's house to that of G. Williams, covering the Woody house. There still remained quite a gap between the 18th and 5th corps, pickets only connecting the troops. However, this interval was over a most desolate piece of country, woody, rocky, and quite hilly. Warren was on the right of Smith, his line reaching from near the front of J. White's house to the Mechanicsville Turnpike. Burnside came next, occupying a refused flank along the turnpike, in advance of the church and the Curry and Armstrong houses. Wilson was on the extreme right, Sheridan with two divisions on the extreme left near Bottom's Bridge. Our line was almost, if not quite, nine miles long.

General Lee quickly discovered the strengthening of our left, and made the following disposition of his forces: Breckinridge, with two divisions of Hill, was on the right; Hoke and Anderson (Longstreet) were in the centre; Early

(Ewell) with Heth's division of Hill's corps on the left. The line extended from the Adams house past Watt's Hill in advance of New Cold Harbor, and thence to Totopotomoy Creek. Lee was well and strongly intrenched over his whole line. The men had ample time to complete the intrenchments, and while there was not any attempt at abatis, there were some slashings. It was quite evident that the time for the final struggle had come. Grant must now withdraw from Lee's front, refrain from attempting to break his lines, and transfer his troops to the James, or once more mass his troops, assail the well-intrenched lines in his front, and by sheer force break through the barrier interposed between him and Richmond.

General Meade issued his orders to the various corps commanders to make an attack along the whole line at 4.30 A. M., June 3, and the commanders of the different corps were charged with the execution of the order. There is no doubt but that the order was issued in direct conformity to instructions from General Grant. The tactical movement was very simple. Each corps commander was to form his corps as he might determine, a grand rush was to be made, and great were the hopes that success would crown our arms.

The ground at Old and New Cold Harbor was quite familiar to many of the Army of the Potomac. It was here that Lee had assumed the offensive against the isolated right wing of McClellan under Fitz-John Porter. The conditions, however, were quite reversed. At that time Lee delivered the assault, and with great success. This time Lee received the assault, and was fully as successful in maintaining his lines as he had been in carrying ours in 1862. Let us look at the position of Lee and the ground over which we were to assault. It will be noticed that the principal attack to be delivered was on the Confederate right, and here were massed in force 40,000 men, who were to break through the lines if possible. This intrenched line of the enemy was on a low

hill that was quite long, ending on the right, or south, on the Chickahominy swamps, making it quite impossible to turn the position without crossing the river. On the north the hill or ridge was broken by ravines. On the east, towards Cold Harbor, it was quite a gradual slope. Along the crest of this hill was a sunken road which ran along the front of their breastworks, and this made a natural defense which was utilized by the enemy. The ground on the left, towards the centre, was more level, and though broken up by streams and swamps, was not as capable of defense. Up the slopes of Watt's Hill, over the ravines and sides on the north and east, were to move the assaulting forces.

The assault was ordered at 4.30 A. M. It is agreed with great unanimity that the troops moved at the appointed time, and that between 4.30 and 4.45 the attack was made. Barlow formed his men in two lines; both deployed. Gibbon formed two lines; the first deployed in line, and the second line in close column of regiments. Birney's division was used as a supporting column. At the appointed time the men sprang to arms, and advancing with great rapidity, the lines of Barlow and Gibbon swept up to the intrenched lines of the enemy. Barlow met with success. His first line swept over the skirmishers and outposts, carried the sunken road, and swept into the enemy's lines, capturing prisoners and three pieces of artillery. The enemy met this assault with vigor and courage. They opened at once a severe fire upon the advancing line, but with no avail, and in a short time they were obliged to leave the position they had so gallantly defended. The report was immediately sent back that the lines of the enemy were pierced. But rallying the disorganized troops behind their second line, the enemy advanced at once upon the victorious Barlow, and from lack of support he was forced back out of the works and out of the sunken road. Barlow was obstinate, and fell back only about seventy yards, where his men quickly covered themselves and never

gave up their position. The failure of Barlow to hold the captured line after it was once in his possession is ascribed to the fact that his second line did not advance with the steadiness and brilliancy of the first.

Gibbon advanced with as great celerity as Barlow, but though the dash and enthusiasm were the same, his lines never penetrated the enemy's works. Gibbon's advance lost a good deal of its coherence, because in his front he had to cross a swamp, which necessarily created confusion in his advancing columns; and although after this obstacle had been passed his men pushed on with gallantry, still the impetus of an unbroken advance was lacking, and, as before stated, he never penetrated the lines, though some of his gallant officers leaped on the works and fell on the enemy's side of them. Owing to the swamp before mentioned, the confusion existed in the second as well as the first line. Owen's brigade of the supporting line had been ordered to deploy from column of regiments into line of battle as soon as the works should be reached by the first line, but by some misunderstanding he effected his deployment before the line was fairly engaged and thus added to the confusion; and although the obstacle that caused confusion in Gibbon's line had been overcome and he maintained his position near the works, his failure was apparent. The losses in Hancock's corps were quite 3000 killed, wounded, and missing.

The 6th corps at the appointed time instantly moved to the front. This corps was formed in two lines of battle, in the same order as on June 1, — Ricketts on the right, Russell in the centre, and Neill in support. These troops advanced with great intrepidity. All that courage and soldierly bearing could accomplish these gallant men did. At 6 A. M. news was received that Ricketts had carried the line in his front, but Russell was repulsed. It was up the gentle slope from the east face of Watt's Hill and ridge to the northward that Wright had to take his men. The gallant soldiers of the

Army of Northern Virginia were too well intrenched to have any trouble in resisting these assaults. The ground over which our men advanced was strewn with dead, dying, and wounded, and in less than half an hour Wright was repulsed at all points.

Smith, too, was to move at 4.30, and with commendable promptness was under way not far from that time. His assault was over a plain, broken in the centre by a ravine, and in this accident of the ground Smith made his attack. Devens was on the right of the ravine, and Martindale was to move down the ravine, with Brooks on the left. Devens was charged with looking after the 5th corps connection, and Brooks was to keep in communication with the 6th corps. In the first advance the outposts and skirmishers were quickly overrun, and our men reached the breastworks, but it was of no avail. In vain did Martindale move gallantly to the front, only to be repulsed and driven back with loss. In the confusion of the repulse of Martindale, Brooks was severely handled by an enfilading fire from the Confederate batteries; and though repeated orders were given to both these officers to renew the assault, yet it was not done, and our old lines were again occupied and held. Warren, who occupied a front of nearly four miles, was altogether too much extended to allow of his having any available force to assault with, and he was content with carrying the enemy's skirmish line on his front.

The 9th corps had been massed in rear of Griffin, and had moved out to attack the enemy, which they did with some success, driving them from their front and pushing their lines well to the right of the enemy's left.

Thus we see that, with this exception just mentioned of the 9th corps, all had failed. Hancock's temporary success had been lost, and although all along the line we were nearer the enemy than at the commencement of the attack, we were absolutely unable to show any real substantial gain for our loss of between 8000 and 9000 men, the flower of

our command. Many a gallant soldier had heard his last reveille, and at nightfall the Army of the Potomac was in a disheartened condition. Failure all along the line ! At what a sacrifice was this order to assault at 4.30 A. M. carried out !

I can hardly agree with some of the statements that the battle was over in ten minutes. There is little or no truth in them. The fact is the rush was made, and it was repulsed. Our advanced positions taken were held ; and while no results, none whatever, were attained, the fighting was resolutely maintained for about two to three hours. The enemy, alive to the fact that Barlow and Gibbon and Wright and Smith were uncomfortably close to their lines, advanced in some force. Whatever might have been their object, they were easily and quickly driven back. In front of Gibbon this partook of the nature of an attack, but with no success to their arms. With this statement the battle at Cold Harbor is over. It is but fair, however, to look back upon these movements of the last few days, and see if it is not true that up to the final assault upon Lee's lines the movements were well made, and were ably conducted and productive of important results.

It seems to me that the turning movement of the army from the North Anna to the Pamunkey at Hanover Town and Totopotomoy Creek was well made, that the troops marched well and were in good spirits and condition, that the reconnoissances in force from the Pamunkey to the Totopotomoy and the gradual extensions of the line by the left were well done. It is true that General Crawford got a little disturbed on the Shady Grove Church Road, but the movements were on the whole well connected and the enemy failed to find the weak spots, if there were any. As to the movement that brought Cold Harbor into our lines, it is free from criticism, with the exception of the stupid blunder of the staff officer in directing Smith upon Newcastle, which lost us several very valuable hours. This point so vital to our position

was taken and held, and I firmly believe that the preliminary fighting was necessary and well done, although at heavy loss.

I think that Burnside and Warren were quite careless in the contraction of their lines on the 2d of June. The enemy were very vigilant and active, always pushing out for knowledge, and always ready to put into action, here and there, sufficient bodies of men to compel respectful attention.

General Warren, in a note to me in regard to this matter, says that it was supposed that Burnside would look after all that movement, and maintain close communication with him, which, if it had been done, would have saved all the trouble.

The putting of Hancock on the left was skillfully and well done. To take ten hours to march ten miles does seem a good while; but like all movements made over blind and little known roads in the night, double the time estimated was consumed. It is rarely that the troops get to the points designated anywhere near on time.

Direct assaults on well-intrenched lines rarely proved successful in our late war, such was the character of the defense on both sides, stubborn, brave, cool, calm. There are, however, notable instances of their success in this very campaign. Upton, with part of the 6th corps, carried a face of the Salient at Spottsylvania on May 10, and later Hancock swept victoriously over the works and gained great success. But here also the stubborn defense came in. Although beaten at the centre, the formation of another line was quickly made, and while the advantages gained were great, the results did not equal the expectation.

Von Moltke, in the late Franco-Prussian war, made direct assaults at Gravelotte, which compelled Bazaine to be shut up in Metz. Direct assaults have always been made, and there may be times when it is positively necessary to make them. In order to make these assaults successful, the lines to be carried must be very carefully and thoroughly reconnoitred, the weak places discovered, if possible, and the vital place —

the point where success can secure the desired result, that is, the smashing of the opposing lines — must be carefully designated. It nowhere appears that either General Grant or General Meade made any such survey as is here suggested. The only thing done was to issue an order to attack along the whole line. Neither were Generals Hancock, Wright, or Smith asked as to the best places to put in their men. I realize that this position is open to very severe criticism, in this, that it must be a poor commander of a corps who cannot be relied upon to make the best selection of points deemed weak upon which to make an assault. Let me ask why was Barlow's second line so backward on this eventful day. It nowhere appears that Birney, who was to support both Barlow and Gibbon, was ordered to their support, but, on the contrary, he was only ordered to hold the lines vacated by them, and he never moved to help them. Surely to those who know Birney it is quite certain that had he received orders to advance, he would have done so. Why was that swamp first found in front of Gibbon when he moved to the assault? The critical point was Watt's Hill. Barlow was fairly on it at one time. Why was not this place held? As a matter of history, its great importance was not discovered until after the battle was over.

The occasion was a momentous one to Grant. Lee was directly in his path; and he determined once more to try to break his lines by direct assault. Granting that the necessity existed and was justified in Grant's mind, it seems to me that the following criticism is just: Would it not have been well for him, before hurling 40,000 men on these lines, to have looked the ground over very carefully? I am not prepared to say that, however carefully the lines had been examined and the men put in, the assault would have succeeded. The failure might have been more conspicuous by reason of this care. Hence it may be said with truth that the attack ought never to have been made.

Badeau gives as an excuse for the failure to know the lines, that the wooded nature of the ground prevented them from being observed. Would it not have been well to have abandoned the whole movement if the assault was to be a move in the dark upon the valiant and brave Army of Northern Virginia, carefully intrenched in a most defensible position?

In one of the many conversations with J. Russell Young during his tour around the world, General Grant says that there were two battles fought in our war which ought not to have been ordered. One of them was the assault by McPherson on the defenses of Vicksburg, made in response to McClelland's reports of great success in his front, and the other was Cold Harbor.

It is greatly to be regretted that this opinion was formed ten years after the close of the war, and not on the 3d of June, 1864, when many, very many, valuable lives might have been saved. The total losses in the operations around Bethesda Church and Cold Harbor are put by the different reports as follows:—

Adjutant-General's report	10,058
General Meade's report	13,153
McParlin's report	13,229

The losses on the 1st and 2d of June are included in the above, and cannot be separately estimated.

We know that over 500 prisoners were lost by Warren; Burnside's fight on the 2d was hotly contested; Wright and Smith lost over 2000 on the 1st, and Sheridan lost in his three divisions at least 500. My estimates, made up in a great measure on these facts, make our casualties foot up to 5000 for the 1st and 2d of June, leaving a loss of about 8300 in the assault of June 3: too many, far, far too many, to be sacrificed where the results obtained were of no value, and the army was left disheartened.

XIV

THE BATTLE OF COLD HARBOR

BY

JOHN C. ROPES, ESQ.

Read before the Society February 12, 1883

THE BATTLE OF COLD HARBOR

THE withdrawal of the army from its position on the North Anna was imperative, unless General Grant was prepared to risk a very serious loss with a very small prospect of success. Without indorsing his extreme statement to Halleck that "even success would not justify" such a slaughter as would be caused by a direct attack, we may well concur in his decision that an attack was wholly unwise. He¹ "determined, therefore," as he wrote to Halleck on the 26th of May, "to turn the enemy's right by crossing at or near Hanover Town."

It does not appear that at this time he had any other plan in his mind but that of changing the situation of the two armies, in the hope that he would find the Army of Northern Virginia in a position which could be assaulted with some chance of success. Already he had pretty much made up his mind that he should have to attack that army in their works, if he intended to attack it at all.² "A battle with them outside of intrenchments," he writes to Halleck, "cannot be had." One would have supposed that, considering that the experience of the past three weeks had shown the extreme difficulty of effecting anything of consequence against Lee's army when behind intrenchments, General Grant would have felt that his task was now, in some respects at least, by no means an easy one. But with characteristic confidence he believes, or affects to believe, that the real reason why the Confederate army will not fight outside of their intrenchments is (to use his own language) because it is "really whipped." Still, even if he did suspect that the morale of Lee's army was affected unfavorably by his fierce and

¹ Badeau, vol. ii, p. 262.

² Ibid.

repeated assaults, it is none the less remarkable that he should not have tried to shift the burden of attack from his own army to that of his antagonist. Difficult as this may have been, it was not, as will soon appear, by any means impossible, and it would certainly have been an object well worth making a strenuous effort to obtain. If he could by a rapid and well-concealed march have seized New Bridge on the Chickahominy, it is not at all unlikely that Lee would have attacked him. In such an event, Lee must either have attacked or confessed himself forced back to the lines of Richmond. And it seems to me that if General Grant, when he broke camp on the North Anna, had set this object clearly before his eyes and before the eyes of his generals, the thing might have been done.

Let us therefore trace with care the movements of both armies in this change of the theatre of operations from the North Anna to the Chickahominy.

On the 27th of May the cavalry, consisting of Torbert's and Gregg's divisions under Sheridan, supported by Russell's division of the 6th corps, crossed the Pamunkey and occupied Hanover Town.

On the 28th the 5th corps crossed at Hanover Town, the 2d corps four miles higher up, and the rest of the 6th corps at or near the same place. The 2d and 6th corps connected, and communication was established with the 5th corps.

The same day General Sheridan attacked Fitz-Hugh Lee's division of cavalry, supported by Butler's South Carolina brigade, at Hawes's Shop, and made himself master of that very important position. The loss was heavy on both sides for the number engaged.

The next morning, the 29th, the 9th corps crossed the river, and took position on the left of Hancock and between him and Warren.

The whole army was now across the river. Had it been Grant's intention to move rapidly to the Chickahominy, now

was the time to do it. The distance from Hawes's Shop to Cold Harbor, a place of importance as a meeting of various roads, is only six miles.

But the 29th was spent in reconnoitring to the north and west.¹ Russell's division of the 6th corps was sent north to Hanover Court House, and, as might have been expected, arrived there without meeting any opposition. Later in the same day Getty's division of the same corps was sent to the same place.

Barlow's division of the 2d corps was sent out in a westerly or southwesterly direction, and met the enemy intrenched near Swift Creek, a tributary of the Totopotomoy, and running in a southeasterly direction into it a short distance west of the Sheldon house. Finding himself unable to make further progress, he sent for reinforcements. Birney came up that afternoon, and Gibbon the next morning.

Warren sent Griffin's division towards Bethesda Church, and that officer crossed the Totopotomoy with a portion of his command.

The 9th corps was held in reserve.

All these movements were tentative merely. The troops were sent out merely to feel the enemy and ascertain his whereabouts. General Grant in his report simply says, "On the 29th and 30th we advanced, with heavy skirmishing, to the Hanover Court House and Cold Harbor Road, and developed the enemy's position north of the Chickahominy."

Badeau says that² "on the 29th Grant ordered a reconnoissance in force." Swinton says,³ "Where Lee had taken up his real vantage-ground was uncertain, and with the view of developing his position strong reconnoissances by all the corps were thrown forward."

¹ 69 W. R. 307.

² Badeau, vol. ii, p. 270.

³ Swinton, p. 479. Why was it so certain to be a "vantage-ground"?

Meantime, General Lee, who had discovered our withdrawal from the North Anna early on the 27th, retired on that day to Ashland, on the Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad, and on the 28th retreated to Atlee's, on the Virginia Central Railroad, reaching there about six in the evening.¹

His 3d corps under Hill was on the left of his line, and was not far from Atlee's Station. His 1st corps under Anderson was in the centre, and the 2d corps under Early² on the right, at Hundley's Corner,³ and covering the northerly road via Pole Green Church⁴ and the easterly road via Old Church.⁵

Whether the march of our army might not have been prolonged on the night of the 28th is a question worth considering. If the march could have been made directly from Hawes's Shop to Bethesda Church or Cold Harbor, it would have been a great gain to us. To have been at either Bethesda Church or Cold Harbor on the morning of the 29th would have carried with it a very considerable strategical advantage. Early's corps was the only body of troops that could have impeded the movement, and such a march would of course have been covered by a strong detachment of cavalry and infantry on the right of the column.

Similar remarks are applicable to a movement to Cold Harbor on the 29th, as General Lee's army was so placed that it could hardly have opposed it successfully. At least half of his army was in intrenchments covering the Virginia Central Railroad, which, as it was his source of supply, he was of course obliged to protect until our movements had made it certain that we were not aiming that way. In truth, Lee's

¹ Badeau, vol. ii, p. 270.

² Early's Last Year of the War, p. 30.

³ Not to be confounded with "Polly Hundley's Corner." Hundley's Corner is not shown on the Cold Harbor map, but should be near the top of the map, near the middle, close to the Tulley house.

⁴ Pole Green Church should be on the Totopotomoy map near the bottom, a quarter of a mile south of the Wright house.

⁵ This road is north of the Bethesda Church Road, and runs from Hundley's Corner by the Butler, Bowles, and Armstrong houses in a northeast direction.

army was resting that day ; we had to hunt them up ; every encounter of that day was brought about by us. Lee, in fact, with his usual insight into his adversary's plans, or his usual good fortune, remained behind his works, taking the risk of Grant's attempting to outflank him. But in point of fact the Pamunkey movement had placed it within Grant's power to turn completely the right of Lee's army. He had his choice of two modes of operation. He could either have marched to the Chickahominy directly, as has been suggested, or he could have concentrated his whole army upon Early's corps, which was exposed on its right flank. Our position, based as we now were on White House, enabled us to form line of battle with perfect safety running north and south. Had we, promptly upon our arrival on the south side of the Pamunkey, on the night of the 28th or morning of the 29th, pushed our troops well beyond Bethesda Church, which Early did not occupy until the 30th,¹ we should have turned the enemy's right completely, and by occupying the Mechanicsville (or Bethesda Church) Road should have covered two of the principal avenues to Richmond. In this position we could either have delivered a telling blow upon Early, or, if that seemed unpromising, could have placed ourselves in a position in which Lee would have been well-nigh compelled to attack us.

But if the occupation of the Mechanicsville Pike had proved impossible, owing to the activity of General Early, he certainly could not have prevented our army from marching to Cold Harbor and thence to New Bridge. His attention could have been occupied by one corps, and the other three could have been sent to their destination.

The fact is, that Grant lost the initiative from the moment of his crossing the Pamunkey. Important as the initiative always is in war, it would seem to be much more important when, instead of pitched battles, there is nothing but a series of assaults, in which the assailant is sure to lose a great many

¹ Early's *Last Year of the War*, etc., p. 30.

men and pretty sure not to win any very notable success. This advantage, whatever it may have amounted to, General Grant threw away. He knew, he says, that Lee's army would not come out of their intrenchments and fight him, and so, instead of going at once for their communications, he spends a whole day in finding out exactly where their intrenchments are.

The next day, the 30th, our army, having found out that these intrenchments extended from the Virginia Central Railroad on their left to Pole Green Church on their right, attacked them with considerable loss and with varying success, a few hundred prisoners being captured by Hancock. The 6th corps was recalled from Hanover Court House and formed on Hancock's right.

On the same day General Lee, finding that the Federal troops confronted the extreme left of his line near Atlee's Station, divined that our left was exposed, and at once ordered Early to outflank us by moving on Bethesda Church. That officer attacked with his customary energy and some success at first, though ultimately repulsed with loss.

The armies now facing each other and in close proximity to each other, it became extremely difficult for either to gain any advantage by manœuvring. Moreover nothing in the movements of the past three days indicated any particular position, to gain which the Federal army was manœuvring. Still the enemy had extended their right, and we had extended our left, and the tendency was for both armies to approach the Chickahominy; hugging each other, as they were, with the close embrace of mortal foes in a desperate struggle, wherever one went the other had to follow. In this way, doubtless, Cold Harbor would ultimately have been the scene of a struggle. But the conflict was precipitated by the cavalry.

There is some discrepancy in the accounts in respect to the seizure of Cold Harbor. Meade¹ says, "Sheridan with two

¹ Meade's Report (67 W. R. 194).

divisions was sent to occupy Cold Harbor, driving the enemy out of the place." Sheridan¹ puts it somewhat differently: "On the morning of the 31st I visited Torbert and Custer at Custer's headquarters, — Torbert's division having the advance, — and found that they had already talked over a plan to attack and capture Cold Harbor which I indorsed; and on the afternoon of the 31st the attack was made, and after a hard-fought battle, the town taken."

As the enemy, realizing the importance to our army of this position, covering, as it did, the most direct route to our base of supplies at White House, had not only occupied it in some force before Sheridan's attack, but were now preparing energetically to retake it, Sheridan sent for reinforcements, and the 6th and 18th corps were promptly sent to his support.

The 31st showed, therefore, a decided gain for us on the extreme left of our line. On our right, Birney of Hancock's corps crossed Swift Creek and captured the enemy's advanced line. The 5th, 6th, and 9th corps did no fighting this day, but in the evening the 6th was sent, as has been said, to Cold Harbor, where it arrived about 10 A. M. of June 1.

Smith, also, with the 18th corps, 16,000 strong, arrived at 3 P. M. of June 1, having gone from White House, where he had landed, to Newcastle, owing to the mistake of a staff officer.

That afternoon at five o'clock Wright and Smith attacked the enemy, and gained some ground and a few hundred prisoners. On the rest of our line, in the other corps, there was heavy skirmishing, but no advantage was gained by either side.

On the afternoon of June 1 General Meade ordered Hancock "to move promptly" from his position on the extreme right of our line, "and to reach Cold Harbor as soon as possible," and take position on Wright's left. The order urged Hancock to make every exertion, and Hancock and his gallant officers and men did all that was possible. But the troops

¹ Report of Committee on Conduct of the War, supp. part 2. Sheridan's Report (87 W. R. 794).

unfortunately missed their way, owing to the misinformation of a staff officer, and arrived not before daybreak, as they had hoped and expected to do, but only at half-past six o'clock, and in an exhausted condition.

It was undoubtedly General Grant's and General Meade's intention that the reconnoissance by Smith and Wright on the afternoon of the 1st should be followed by a serious attack by them at daybreak of the 2d, in which Hancock would participate; and it would seem that, had it not been for the misadventure that befell the 2d corps, that attack would have then been made. While it is not probable that Smith and Wright would have found their task made any easier than they had found it on the afternoon of the 1st, there is some reason to believe that Hancock, who was placed on the left of the line, would have encountered fewer opponents and less formidable works than he was obliged to encounter the next morning, when he took his part in the great assault. General Miles, who commanded the left brigade of Barlow's division, which was on the left of the 2d corps, and Colonel Hapgood, who commanded the 5th New Hampshire in that brigade, concur in stating that, so far as they could judge, the enemy were not in force opposite to this line on the afternoon of the 2d. Still we find from Confederate authorities (Gregg, 157) that, on the night of the 1st, Breckinridge left his position (about the centre of their line) and moved towards the right, and that on the morning of the 2d, Hill's corps marched to the right, halted for a while on the field of Gaines's Mill, and then, pursuing its march, occupied the extreme right of the line, Gregg's (or McGowan's) South Carolina brigade "holding the last shoulder of the ridge that rises from the swamp of the Chickahominy." General R. H. Anderson, commanding the 1st corps, A. N. V., states that on the morning of the 2d Breckinridge was posted on the heights to the right of Hoke, and that A. P. Hill, with two divisions, moved to that point by way of Gaines's Mill.

On the whole, it is probable that the movement of Breckinridge and Hill had not been completed on the afternoon of the 2d and it is quite certain that Gaines's Mill was not strongly held that morning, and that, had we been a little quicker, we could have seized New Cold Harbor, Gaines's Mill, and the road to New Bridge. It may well be that nothing but the accident which befell the 2d corps prevented this from being done. It should, however, be remembered that on the morning of the 2d there was quite an interval between the 18th and 5th corps. The army was not concentrated.

It was now, however, clearly understood, on the afternoon of the 2d of June, at headquarters of the Army of the Potomac, that the enemy were in position and behind intrenchments covering all the roads to the Chickahominy, and that, if we proposed to fight at all on the north side of that river, we must assault the enemy in their works. Accordingly, on the afternoon of the 2d, the 5th corps was extended so as to connect with the right of the 18th, and the 9th corps was drawn back on the right of the 5th, facing north along the pike. Both corps suffered considerably in this movement.

The propriety of making this assault has been discussed already very fully in two, at least, of our papers, and perhaps I ought not to add anything of my own to what has been so well said by those far more competent than I am to give an opinion.

Yet I will make a few suggestions.

First. I do not believe that the morale of the army had been seriously impaired by its experiences up to the 3d of June. It had had a fair measure of success. It had taken no step backward. Every officer and every man felt that there was no hesitation, no timidity, no want of enterprise, at headquarters. True, the losses had been severe, but so had been those of the enemy. Upton had captured a thousand men on the 10th of May; Hancock, four thousand on the 12th. The captures in the little affairs on the North Anna and

Totopotomoy must have comprised at least a thousand or more. The army had manœuvred skillfully, had fought hard, and, on the whole, not unsuccessfully.

Yet, in the second place, it must be confessed that there was nothing in the experience of the army in this campaign to fit it for a great, a decisive battle. Every attack had been either a failure from a total want of proper coöperation and support, or had been only partially successful for the same reason. Often and often the capture of a mere line of skirmishers in their rifle-pits had been the task, and the bloody task, too, of a fine brigade or division. Hence the army had its opinions on the possibility of carrying out these orders for the capture of these positions. Their capture having been, from the time of our arrival at Spottsylvania, the apparent object of all the operations, and it being too plain for controversy that the practicability of success in these operations was not an element that was considered with any great care at the headquarters of the army, it came to be held that it was for those who were to engage personally in the operations to consider it. And consider it they did, feeling, very justly, that otherwise they would be throwing themselves away. Accordingly the orders of the 3d of June were no doubt viewed by those who had to perform them very much as the orders which, almost from day to day previously, had been given to attack the lines at Spottsylvania, at the North Anna, or at Totopotomoy Creek. They do not seem to have been specially emphasized, as they should have been. Pains enough were not taken to imbue the army, and especially the corps, division, and brigade commanders, with the idea that this was to be not a reconnoissance but a battle.

Thirdly. If it be true, as has been stated in one of our papers, that it is practically impossible to make in such a country as that part of Virginia is, a reconnoissance which shall develop and ascertain the strength and weakness of an enemy's position without fighting a battle, or, what comes to

the same thing, losing as many men as in fighting a battle, then it is clear that in such a country the true policy is to manœuvre for a position, even if you have to manœuvre from the North Anna to the James. At some point will certainly be found either open country or the enemy's lines of communication.

Fourthly. I cannot help saying that in my judgment there was a great deal lost by the policy constantly pursued of keeping the army in almost constant contact with the enemy, and by the frequent and sanguinary attacks upon really unimportant positions. Had the army been kept, as a rule, at a reasonable distance from its adversary, had the troops never been ordered to attack intrenchments except to gain an important and definite object, they would have gone into any serious conflict in greater numbers and with much higher morale.

Fifthly. If an assault like that delivered at Cold Harbor is to be made at all, it should be made at one place and only at one place. Whatever may be the difficulties attending the selection of this place, some place should be selected. And not only this — the troops should be selected. The successful charge of Upton was made by twelve picked regiments, and though made at six o'clock in a May afternoon, was a brilliant and complete success. The *operation* as a whole no doubt failed, for Mott did not support the charge as he was to have done. But the *charge* succeeded. And there is no reason to suppose that similar precautions would not generally have resulted in similar successes.

These general observations made, a few words will conclude all I need say about the battle of Cold Harbor, the details of which have already been so fully given to the Society in other papers.

The assault was punctually made at half-past four in the morning. Barlow's division was on the left of the 2d corps; Gibbon's division was on the right; Birney was in reserve

and was to be put in as soon as the first works were entered. On the right of the 2d corps was the 6th, on its right the 18th.

Barlow's first line, consisting of the brigades of Miles and Brooke, met with fair success, a portion of the troops carrying the enemy's works in their immediate front. Some regiments, at any rate, in the first line of Miles's brigade, conspicuous among which was the 5th New Hampshire under Colonel Hapgood, entered the intrenchments, as did also Brooke's first line, which consisted of a strong new regiment, the 7th New York heavy artillery, under Colonel Morris, and some companies of the 148th Pennsylvania, under Major Forster. Three guns, one color, and two or three hundred prisoners were taken. But Brooke, unfortunately for us, was severely wounded while bringing up his second line; and for some reason or other, perhaps the broken character of the ground, the second line of both brigades came up slowly. Moreover the brigades of Byrnes and McDougall, which constituted the second line of the division, were both behind time; and in spite of all efforts, the troops which had carried the intrenchments, being unsupported, were driven out, leaving the captured guns in the hands of the enemy.

Gibbon's division was checked by a swamp, the existence of which had somehow unaccountably escaped observation, and, notwithstanding great and heroic exertions and great loss of life, accomplished nothing.

Birney's division was not ordered in at all, perhaps because the leading division not having secured a lodgment, there was no object in putting in the reserve division.

On the right of the 2d corps there were also determined charges by the troops of the 6th and 18th corps, but nowhere was any success worth mentioning achieved.

The 5th and 9th corps were not to attack unless special opportunity offered, and they of course made no movement of importance.

It is probable that the best point for the attack was where Barlow's division attacked; and it is not unlikely that if all possible pains had been taken, both to organize properly the assaulting column and to support it when it should have got in by an overwhelming force, the lines could not only have been carried, but the enemy's whole position turned. But to effect this would have required that every detail of the whole movement should have been fully and particularly arranged beforehand, so far as was possible. There was plenty of time for this, but it was not done. The attack was made exactly as the attacks along Swift Creek or the Totopotomoy three or four days before. It was bravely made, but it was not made as part of a well-understood movement in which success was expected, and in which success was to be productive of decisive results. Nothing less than selecting some one place — perhaps on an imperfect reconnoissance, but still making the best choice possible under the circumstances, then selecting the troops and detailing them to this special work of honor and danger, the brilliant and successful performance of which the whole army is expecting from the chosen column of attack, then perfecting arrangements for pouring into the gap in the enemy's lines, as soon as it shall have been made, an overwhelming force, moving them in good order, too, and giving them as explicit directions as possible as to what they are to do when they get in — would have sufficed to justify an assault on June 3 at Cold Harbor. All these pains ought to have been taken. Had they been taken, I think the assault ought to have been made, and I think it would have been successful.

It does not appear that at Cold Harbor there were any artificial obstructions, such as abatis or "slashings," to detain an assaulting column in front of the enemy's line. None such are recollected by those officers in the 2d and 6th corps, who were in the battle, with whom I have conferred. The advancing line of Gibbon's division was, it is true, checked

by a swamp, but there does not appear to have been any other similar obstacle in the way of any other portion of our troops. The fact is, the men were checked by the tremendous fire of the enemy, whose works protected them until our lines had arrived within a few paces. It was a repetition of the battle of New Orleans. Still, had the army been fresh and in good condition and spirits, and had the men known that the work which they were ordered to do had been carefully considered by their chiefs, that it would not have been assigned to them had it not been of vital importance to the success of the cause, and had it not been expected that their efforts would have been crowned with success, the selected point would have been carried. In fact, Miles's brigade did actually, as we have seen, carry a portion of the line in their front; and had the support of the rest of the division been as prompt as it ought to have been, a considerable success would doubtless have resulted. But still there was no reserve to the 2d corps. Had Barlow's dispositions been so perfect that Miles's success had been followed up, had Hancock, seeing this, ordered Birney's division in, still there is every reason to suppose that the divisions of Barlow and Birney would have had their hands full in a short time, and would have had as much as they could do to hold what ground they might have gained. There would have been no support at hand. Gibbon, Wright, and Smith, on the right, heavily engaged, could have rendered no aid. Warren and Burnside were too far off, of course. The truth is, that, disposed as our army was, with every corps in line and no general reserve whatever, no crushing success was possible for us against such an adversary as the Army of Northern Virginia. And it does seem to me that, if General Grant or General Meade considered the attack on the morning of June 3 as a battle, in the proper sense of that term, they made very inadequate dispositions to insure success. If, as I say, things had gone smoothly in the 2d corps, we might have captured a thousand or two prisoners

and perhaps twenty guns; but I fail to see any probability that the 2d corps, unassisted, could hope to do more than this. There would have been, of course, an immediate reinforcement of the enemy's right; and disordered and decimated as Hancock's troops would necessarily have been by their successful assault, they could not have accomplished more than to have held what prisoners, guns, and ground they had acquired in the first half or three quarters of an hour.

It may be said that advantage would have been taken by our other corps commanders of any such reinforcements sent by Lee to his extreme right. But when, I ask, did any expectation of this kind ever get realized? Not at Spottsylvania, certainly, on the 12th of May; not at Petersburg, certainly, on the 30th of July.

To illustrate, or rather to show, the nature of the expectations which prevailed at headquarters about this assault at Cold Harbor, let us hear what Grant and Meade say in their reports:

"The 2d" (says Grant¹) "was spent in getting the troops into position for an attack on the 3d. On the 3d of June we again assaulted the enemy's works in the hope of driving him from his position. In this attempt our loss was heavy, while that of the enemy, I have reason to believe, was comparatively light. It was the only general attack made from the Rapidan to the James which did not inflict upon the enemy losses to compensate for our own losses."

Here there is no trace of any other intention than that of making a general attack, similar to those which had been previously made. There is, to be sure, the expression of a vague hope of driving the enemy from his position, but the only regret is that the losses were not more evenly balanced.

General Meade is quite as far from giving any indication that in attacking the enemy at Cold Harbor he felt that he was fighting a great battle. In fact, his report is so

¹ 67 W. R. 21, 22.

exceedingly terse and dry, not to say meagre, that I venture to say that nine persons out of ten, reading it without having had the honor of a personal acquaintance with that distinguished officer, would rise from its perusal with the feeling that his principal function in the army was to chronicle in a neat and succinct way the doings of his corps and division commanders, than which, as we shall all agree, a more erroneous opinion could hardly be entertained. Meade says :¹

“ At four A. M., June 3, a vigorous assault was made by the 2d, 6th, and 18th corps. Barlow's division, 2d corps, carried a part of the enemy's line on our extreme left, but, before Barlow could be reinforced, the enemy, rallying, compelled him to withdraw. The assault of the 6th and 18th corps being unsuccessful, about 11 A. M. offensive operations closed.”

Now let us see how this tone which prevailed at headquarters is to be recognized in the army. The late David A. Russell, one of the most gallant and efficient officers in the army, after describing in his (unpublished) report the attack of his division of the 6th corps on the afternoon of the 2d of June, says :

“ Works were constructed during the night, behind which the troops lay posted till the morning of the 3d, when another advance was ordered and attempted along the whole line ; but little ground was gained, however, and other works were immediately thrown up under sharp and deadly musketry fire.”

Here the total absence of any idea that the 3d of June was any special occasion is manifest.

The battle, so called, of Cold Harbor was, in fact, nothing but an assault against an enemy of known steadiness and courage, well intrenched. It was an assault along the whole line, with no adequate dispositions to improve any success, had any of the troops engaged penetrated the enemy's works.

If it be said that the enemy were so strong in front of

¹ 67 W. R. 194.

Warren and Burnside that no concentration of an adequate force on our left could safely be made, I reply that in that case no such assault ought to have been made. When the chances are not in favor of an assault, no general ought to attack unless he is in some desperate strait; and none such existed in our case at the time. And in this connection we cannot fail to observe and to praise the great skill and daring displayed by General Lee, who, with an inferior force, and in presence of an enemy who was, he well knew, intending to attack him heavily, maintained a most extended and thin line, and even gave an offensive character to the operations which he ordered on his extreme left.

His object in this was of course to prevent a concentration at any point in our lines of an adequate force to make a successful assault, and his object was, as we have seen, attained. Whether, however, there was any need of our holding the Bethesda Church Road, which necessitated such an extension of our lines, may perhaps be a question. One thing is certain, — if we could not afford to loose our hold upon it, we ought to have weakened our line elsewhere. Half the troops in the 6th and 18th corps would have sufficed to hold our own lines, and the remainder should have been sent to the left, where the only real and desperate assault should have been made by the 2d corps.

But if General Grant had, after consideration, concluded that it would not be safe to weaken his right or centre in order to concentrate on his left, then he should have concluded to abandon his attack. No result that he could have hoped for could, humanly speaking, have justified an attack made without any dispositions to pour into a breach in the enemy's lines, when made, a large body of troops. If he had not the troops to use in this way, then such a battle as this was a mere waste of men.

Nor will the reconnoissance theory bear examination. I refer to General Meade's remark, made two days after this

very battle, "In this country I must fight a battle to reconnoitre a position." The answer to this is, that it is not worth while to fight a battle merely to reconnoitre a position, or for any purpose than to win a battle. If the country is so difficult, then go elsewhere. If you have not a sufficiently superior force, as Sherman had in his Atlanta campaign, to flank the enemy constantly out of their strong positions, then send for reinforcements. Anyway, nothing is gained by losing nine or ten thousand men in a mere reconnoissance. If it be asked, How could General Meade tell that his attack would not be successful, I reply, that he had nowhere made the dispositions requisite to obtain under any circumstances more than a very moderate amount of success; he had no corps in reserve, ready to be put in when and where the assaulting force should have broken the enemy's lines. If he could not dispose his army so as to have had such a reserve, he should have told General Grant that it was not worth while to incur the necessarily severe losses of a general assault on the enemy's positions, and that they had better cross the James at once.

This paper would be incomplete, did it not mention as it deserves the horrible neglect of our wounded men by General Grant. Having lost the battle, he should at once have sent in a flag of truce and asked to remove his wounded and bury his dead. It would, of course, have been a confession of failure, but he would only have confessed a patent fact. Instead of this, he sent out no flag till the evening of the 5th, and then asked for a truce as a mutual accommodation, and not as a favor to himself. This caused additional delay, and it was not, says General C. H. Morgan, chief of staff of the 2d corps, till nearly five full days after the assault, when nearly all the wounded had perished from hunger, thirst, and pain, that cessation of hostilities took place. In these five days the sufferings of the wounded were simply indescribable. The heat and consequent thirst, not to speak of an entire want of food, added untold agonies to their tortures. "Better," says

Morgan in his narrative, "better the consuming fires of the Wilderness and the Po than the lingering, agonizing death of these poor men, whose vain calls for relief smote upon the ears of their comrades at every lull in the firing. One man was brought into our lines who had survived the dreadful ordeal, and his account of his sufferings, how he had quenched his thirst by sucking the dew from such grass as he could pull at his side, and had allayed the pangs of hunger in the same way, was not well calculated to encourage his comrades to run any risk of being placed in the same position. Only some great and controlling military necessity, involving the lives of many others, could justify this abandonment of the wounded soldiers to their wretched fate." With this opinion we shall all doubtless agree. And I may remark that nothing showed the great courage, patriotism, and discipline of our soldiers more than the fact that after such shocking and inhuman neglect, they were found in a few days assailing the works at Petersburg with their customary bravery.

General Morgan, by the way, says that the statement, in Swinton's *Army of the Potomac*, that an order was given for a new assault which was disregarded by the soldiers, is an absurdity and an impossibility, when ascribed to the 2d corps. In fact, there is no truth in the story.

The reports of this part of the campaign are meagre. "We have nothing," writes Colonel Scott, the custodian of the War Records, "from Breckinridge, Hill, or Heth, Barlow, Gibbon, or Wright, in reference to Cold Harbor." Hancock's report is excellent; Morgan's narrative is also admirable and naturally fuller and more outspoken than the official report of his chief. He says of the 2d corps that it here "received a mortal blow, and never again was the same body of men." Between the Rapidan and the James the loss in this corps alone was about 400 daily. He closes his description with this remark: "The sacrifice at Cold Harbor, where we lost about 3000 men and the enemy as many hundred, ought to have been

the last of that nature, but we shall see the life-blood of the corps was to be drained still more before there came an end to *indiscriminate and useless assaults* upon the enemy's chosen positions."

Of Grant's and Meade's reports we have already spoken.

Badeau, who is an indiscriminate eulogist of Grant, dwells upon the fact that, at the very time that Lee was writing home about his victory, "the national army was intrenching half a mile nearer the rebel line than in the morning." With such notions of what constitutes success in battle, it is needless to say that Badeau will hardly help the military reader much. He calls Cold Harbor "one of a series of terrible blows which Grant was dealing the rebel army," — a curious inversion of the fact, or rather a misstatement of it. Doubtless the blow was terrible, but only to us; it was utterly unsuccessful, considered as a blow; its only effect was to weaken and dispirit our army, and, according to Swinton, almost to demoralize the President and Cabinet.

In summing up the whole narrative, I repeat that it seems to me that Grant lost the initiative by his useless delays on the Pamunkey and Totopotomoy; that he might by alacrity and dash either have overwhelmed Early, or seized the New Bridge and Mechanicsville roads, or one of them, and forced Lee to attack him; that he did, however, lose something by bad luck in the delays which happened to the 18th and 2d corps in concentrating at Cold Harbor; but after all, that his plan of the battle and his preparations for success in it were extremely defective, and that nothing but failure could have been expected.

XV

GRANT'S CAMPAIGN IN VIRGINIA IN 1864

BY

JOHN C. ROPES, ESQ.

Read before the Society May 19, 1884

GRANT'S CAMPAIGN IN VIRGINIA IN 1864

THE campaign of 1864 in Virginia has a character altogether its own. It stands out among the other campaigns of the war with a sort of terrible impressiveness. Its resoluteness, its unconquerable obstinacy, its persistent hopefulness, its heroic quality, command our admiration. But its terribly bloody battles, its encounters of every day, aimless, desperate, and sanguinary, the noble trees cut down by musket bullets, the horrible thickets where the veterans of North and South struggled in blind and deadly combat, the thousands upon thousands of brave men slain and maimed, and, above all, the indecisive results, amaze, terrify, repel, dishearten us.

Let us endeavor to do it justice this evening.

Besides the peculiar characteristics of the operations of this campaign of which I shall have occasion to speak particularly later on, I may remark on the striking contrast which this campaign affords to those of Generals Burnside and Hooker, each of which ingloriously terminated in a single and disastrous battle, fought within a few miles of the Wilderness, where General Grant had the first of his desperate encounters with the Army of Northern Virginia. The military student is also naturally led to compare this campaign with that of General McClellan in 1862, the only other serious and formidable invasion of Virginia undertaken in the war, and he finds everything in the one utterly different from everything in the other, from the plan of the operations to the characteristics of the commanding general.

Few campaigns in history have been the subjects of such diverse and even opposite judgments as this which we are to study this evening. General Grant tells us in his Report that he had, before he commenced operations, "determined

to hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy and his resources, until by mere attrition, if in no other way, there should be nothing left to him but submission." This determination he certainly carried into effect in his campaign from the Rapidan to Petersburg, as the bloody assaults at the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg bear witness. As to the results of this policy, opinions differ. Swinton considers it a failure, that it gravely impaired the efficiency of our own army, and inflicted no injury of consequence on that of General Lee. Badeau and his school, however, contend that, by this continuous assaulting, the spirit of Lee's army was broken and its strength seriously reduced; that, to use Badeau's own words, "the fighting between the Rapidan and the James in 1864 did more than any circumstance or event or series of events of the war to accomplish that for which the war was waged;" that "the losses were the price at which only the country could be saved."

But let us now look at the matter for ourselves.

After the Battle of Gettysburg, in which the Army of the Potomac had won a great victory over its antagonist, the Army of Northern Virginia, it would seem that it should have been the policy of the North to prosecute the campaign in Virginia with vigor, and to reinforce the army under General Meade, so that that gallant and energetic officer could have accomplished some striking success in the autumn of 1863. Various causes, however, interfered with this policy being carried out. The critical condition of the army of General Rosecrans after the defeat at Chickamauga in the latter part of September caused the government to send to its relief the 11th and 12th corps of the Army of the Potomac. Some fifteen or sixteen thousand men, moreover, were sent to New York and other places to put down the draft riots, which had, in New York at any rate, assumed alarming proportions. General Meade thus found himself with an army hardly superior in numbers to that of General Lee, who in October

undertook to force him to a battle on disadvantageous terms. General Meade, finding his right flank turned, was obliged to fall back from Culpeper to and across Bull Run, suffering, however, no loss, and inflicting a smart check on his adversary at Bristoe Station, which was followed in a few weeks by the brilliant feat of arms performed by a division of the 6th corps (Russell's) in the capture of the enemy's works at Rappahannock Station, with about fifteen hundred prisoners, four guns, and eight standards.

In November the armies took up their positions for the winter on the Rapidan, the Army of the Potomac, though small in numbers, being in unusual spirits and excellent condition. The promising plan conceived by General Meade of forcing an engagement near Mine Run with half of Lee's army, while the remainder were stationed in their distant cantonments, failed, owing to the blundering of some of his corps commanders, and the armies went again into winter quarters. Meantime General Grant, who had superseded General Rosecrans in the West, had won the decisive victory of Missionary Ridge or Chattanooga, and had been created a lieutenant-general. During the winter Congress took the unusually wise step of intrusting to this distinguished officer the control of all the land forces of the United States. In assuming this command, General Grant did not propose to take the personal charge of either of the two great armies that were to operate in the East and in the West: the one was still to be commanded by General Meade; General Sherman was naturally placed in charge of the other. Nevertheless General Grant himself determined to accompany the Army of the Potomac in its campaign in Virginia.

Let us now take a glance at the situation of the two armies shortly before the opening of the campaign. The Army of the Potomac was encamped near Culpeper, its pickets watching the banks of the Rapidan. On the other side of that river and west of Mine Run, behind strong intrenchments

running nearly north and south, lay the Army of Northern Virginia.

At Annapolis, the 9th corps of the Army of the Potomac was being refreshed after its arduous campaign in the West, and was receiving additions to its numerical strength in the form of a raw white division and another raw black division.

At and near Washington the government retained between forty and fifty thousand good troops; many of them, it is true, without actual experience in warfare, but almost all having arrived at a very creditable state of discipline.

At the mouth of the James a large force was concentrating, consisting of the 10th and 18th corps, commanded by Generals Gillmore and Smith (Baldy), the whole under the control of the famous General Benjamin F. Butler.

Unconscious of this formidable concentration, the Richmond authorities were using the garrisons of Richmond and Petersburg for the recapture of some unimportant posts in North Carolina.

Under these circumstances General Grant determines upon two lines of operation in the coming campaign. While he, with the Army of the Potomac under General Meade and the 9th corps under General Burnside, operates against Lee and his army on the Rapidan, Butler, with the two corps under him, numbering 35,000 to 40,000 men, is to land at Bermuda Hundred and take Richmond.

Tempting as this project certainly was at first blush, it was a great and perhaps an inexcusable mistake for Grant ever to have entertained it. A force of 10,000 men could have threatened Richmond and Petersburg, with the aid of the fleet, quite as well as a force of 40,000 men. Bermuda Hundred, though admirably adapted as a base of operations against Petersburg, is by no means well situated as a base for a force operating against Richmond. Such a force would be obliged to have a large detachment in the lines at Bermuda Hundred, to guard against an attack from the south, while it

was marching and fighting its way for sixteen miles up to the defenses of Richmond. In fact, as General Humphreys intimates, Grant should have instructed Butler to take Petersburg instead of Richmond. This Butler could no doubt have done.

Lastly, to put such an important operation as this under the charge of a civilian who had never made any military reputation was really an unwarrantable piece of folly. If, as Badeau says, Mr. Lincoln insisted upon it on political grounds, it would have done Mr. Lincoln no harm for General Grant to have reminded him, in distinct and not to be misunderstood speech, that the Congress of the United States had placed him, Grant, in charge of the armies of the United States for the very purpose of seeing to it that this sort of thing should not occur in the future, as it had so often in the past. Had Grant stood his ground, Lincoln would unquestionably have given way.

The first mistake of the campaign, then, was dividing the operations between two armies. Incidental to this was the appointment to the command of the coöperating army of a wholly unfit man, and also giving him erroneous instructions regarding his objective, which should have been Petersburg or Richmond. If we add to these mistakes another, — that in this disposition of his total available force Grant did not reserve enough for the main army, that he was from time to time crippled by not having in the Army of the Potomac the troops, or some part of them, which he had so lavishly bestowed upon Butler, or allowed to be retained at Washington, — we have a serious set of mistakes to begin with.

With his main force, the Army of the Potomac, General Grant intended taking the overland route to Richmond. For this he has been severely and, it seems to me, unjustly criticised. That in course of time Grant and his army made their appearance on the old Peninsula, that the battle of Cold Harbor was fought close to the very ground of that of Gaines's

Mill two years before, seem in the minds of many people to show convincingly that Grant should have transported his army by water to the Peninsula, even as McClellan had done before him.

But this criticism loses sight of several of the important factors in the problem. It could hardly be possible for General Grant in the spring of 1864 to transport his army to the Peninsula much more quickly than General McClellan transported his army in the spring of 1862, and that was a matter of three or four weeks. Nor was it to be expected that General Lee would remain on the Rapidan while his adversary was sending his troops to Fort Monroe or Bermuda Hundred; it may be taken as certain that he would either have followed the example of Joe Johnston and fallen back to the neighborhood of Richmond, which he could have done in infinitely less time than it would have taken General Grant to get there by water with the Army of the Potomac, or else that he would have crossed the Rapidan and marched boldly upon Washington. Had he adopted the first course, I see no reason to suppose that the first battle of the campaign, though fought on the banks of the Chickahominy, would have been any less murderous or indecisive than the sanguinary struggles in the Wilderness, at Spottsylvania, or at Cold Harbor itself. Had he adopted the second course, it is morally certain that a part at least, and very likely a large part, of Grant's army would have been retained in the neighborhood of Washington to meet the threatened invasion.

Then another thing must be taken into account. The real object of the campaign was to effect, if possible, the destruction of General Lee's army, and the farther from his base of operations General Lee could be induced to fight, the more chances there were of this object being attained. It is true that the country over which the army must pass was a country abounding in good positions for an army standing on the defensive; it is true that no army ever stood on the defensive

with more tenacity than the Army of Northern Virginia ; but it must be remembered that it showed the same tenacity at Cold Harbor and at Petersburg that it did at Spottsylvania and on the North Anna.

There was but one way which was certain to give the Army of the Potomac the advantage of choosing its battle-ground, and that was the way adopted by General Sherman in his Atlanta campaign, which was conducted contemporaneously with this campaign of Grant's in Virginia. That way was to flank the enemy out of position after position, until by some fortunate combination of circumstances he could be brought to bay in a place where our great superiority of numbers would tell ; and had General Grant, before he crossed the Rapidan, reinforced his army with the garrison of Washington and, I may add, with one of Butler's corps also, no one, in my judgment, would ever have had reason to complain of his choice of the overland route to Richmond. With such a force at his command he could have received General Lee's attack at the Wilderness with his main body and also have seized Spottsylvania with 30,000 or 40,000 men. As it was, fighting that battle as he did, with an army that had never acted together until the fight began (for the 9th corps as reorganized had not even wintered with the Army of the Potomac), he was afraid to put in all the troops that he had, and the largest division in Hancock's corps remained inactive at the crisis of the fight. How different this from those elaborate and admirable turning movements conducted by Sherman's army in the Atlanta campaign, in the course of which it was constantly found perfectly possible to hold Johnston in position with the bulk of the army, while a large force, fully able to act for the time being alone, was planted upon his communications. But I am anticipating.

General Grant proposed, as we have seen, to operate against Lee and his army ; he hoped to destroy or at least substantially to cripple it in battle.

That army numbered, so far as I can judge, including conscripts and men on leave recently returned, about 56,000 infantry, all good troops in old organizations, and about 14,000 artillery and cavalry, in all about 70,000 men. It was organized in three corps; the 1st under Longstreet, the 2d under Ewell, and the 3d under A. P. Hill. It was an admirable body of troops; as an army it was superior to any of our armies. It had certain great advantages over any and all of our armies: it was homogeneous in origin (the officers and men were all Americans); it was a veteran army (every regiment in it had been in it in 1861, or at least in the early days of 1862); it was organized on sound military principles (every corps commander and nearly every division commander was a graduate of West Point, — there were no political generals in it); it had remained under the same officers from the beginning; no statesmen had tried experiments with it; it felt and always had felt that it was in the hands of a high-minded, brave, skillful leader, and to General Lee every officer and every private yielded a cheerful and unhesitating devotion.

Compare this ideal state of things with that which existed in the camp on the north side of the Rapidan, where during this very winter the commanding general was obliged to defend his action at Gettysburg, before a committee of civilians in Washington, in refutation of the insubordinate slanders of his own officers; and where finally a general arrives from the West to take hold vigorously of the much-enduring Army of the Potomac, ignorant, grossly ignorant of its history, and thinking that it only needs to be fought thoroughly to destroy its formidable antagonist.

For General Grant entirely underestimated the difficulty of the task before him. The army in front of him was, as he ought to have known, an admirable army and admirably commanded. The country which that army proposed to defend was eminently suited for defense. The only advantage

Grant could get would be in superiority of numbers. But what steps did he take to secure this?

The three corps of which the Army of the Potomac now consisted, the 2d, 5th, and 6th, commanded respectively by Generals Hancock, Warren, and Sedgwick (for the 1st and 3d had been absorbed into the 2d and 5th during the winter, a proceeding of very questionable utility), comprised 73,390 men, which enumeration includes all those worthless recruits who were enlisted under that wretched system of heavy bounties which so unwisely prevailed at this time in most of the Northern States. There were also included in the above estimate not a few brand-new regiments; for the North, alone of all civilized communities, adopted the wasteful and suicidal plan of allowing her veteran regiments to die out from sheer depletion and keeping up the apparent numerical force of the army by perfectly raw troops in perfectly new organizations, simply to be food for powder, — pigeons, as an old officer said to me the other day, for Lee's veterans to shoot at.

But it is well that it should be known that at this time in the war it was extremely difficult to get men to go where they were most needed; that is, under the colors of some old regiments, where they would most speedily learn their trade and soonest be able to share the dangers and labors of actual warfare. The volunteers of this period preferred new organizations, many of which were raised as heavy artillery regiments, not for service in the field, but only for the arduous and dangerous duty of defending the forts on the seacoast against the enemy's cruisers. Massachusetts alone raised in the autumn of 1863 and winter of 1863 and 1864 about 20,000 men in new organizations.

To return to the Army of the Potomac. There were, no doubt, exclusive of worthless bounty-jumpers and such trash, some 65,000 veteran infantry in the three corps. But this was only about 10,000 more than the infantry of the Army of

Northern Virginia. To be sure the cavalry and artillery of the Army of the Potomac numbered some 22,000 men ; but neither of these arms could be relied on to take the place of infantry. In fact, Grant does not seem in this campaign to have understood how to use cavalry to the best advantage. However this may be, more infantry and that of the best quality was imperatively needed, or the attempt to force Lee to a battle on equal terms might as well be abandoned.

Here, then, was a question to be settled, a matter to be arranged, of vital importance. It was also a question capable of being settled in a satisfactory manner. General Grant could choose whether he would take with him the troops which formed the garrisons of Washington and its dependencies, or one or even both of the corps of Butler, or the 9th corps. It is true that whatever selection he might make, the result would be, not to increase the Army of the Potomac, but to add a new corps to that army ; he could not fill up the ranks of the old regiments, and thereby add to the strength of the old army ; the best he could do would be to add a new body of troops to the old army. Hence he should have been doubly careful. The troops at and near Washington, for which he was obliged to send after the frightful losses at the Wilderness and Spottsylvania and the expiration of the term of service of so many regiments, might just as well have crossed the Rapidan with him on the 3d of May. But this course was apparently not even thought of. Nor did he care to deprive Butler of any portion of the force from which he was expecting such a feat as the capture of Richmond. He had recourse to the 9th corps, the very poorest choice of the three. This corps consisted of about 20,000 infantry, of whom only about 6000 were veterans and good troops ; but these had been marched¹ from New Berne, N. C., to Vicksburg in Mississippi, and Knoxville in Tennessee, and were by no means in the excellent condition in which the mass of the 2d,

¹ They were mainly transported by rail and boat. — Ed.

5th, and 6th corps unquestionably were in the winter of 1863 and 1864. Then there were some 14,000 men that had never been organized until this winter, and had never of course seen the face of the enemy. A large portion of these were in so-called veteran regiments, so called because officered by officers drawn from various regiments in service, but who had never acted together in any organization; the remainder consisted of a division of black troops, recently enlisted. Not a single regiment of either of these classes had ever been in the field. Grant says in his Report that probably two thirds of Burnside's command were composed of new troops.

Such was the force selected by General Grant to augment the infantry of the Army of the Potomac in their hand-to-hand struggle with the veterans of the Army of Northern Virginia. If anything could add to the manifest inadequacy of Grant's arrangements, it is found in the fact that the 9th corps was not to be incorporated with the Army of the Potomac, but was to be a sort of independent little army by itself. This was to save General Burnside's feelings, as he ranked General Meade. Even if it had hurt Burnside's feelings, such an arrangement as this, interfering so directly as it did with the utility and efficiency of the organization of the army, should never have been thought of for a moment. But it was wholly unnecessary. There have been many greater soldiers than General Burnside. But there never was any one who would more cheerfully sacrifice a technical point of this kind to the needs of the public service. When on the 24th of May the 9th corps was incorporated in the Army of the Potomac, Burnside never murmured.

From the above sketch it is apparent that General Grant could count, in the arduous campaign on which he proposed to enter, upon only a little over 70,000 veteran infantry; and as infantry must be the main reliance of a general warring in a difficult country like Virginia, it seems to me that he may fairly be charged with not having made a sufficient prepara-

tion for his task. For it was not to be expected that 70,000 infantry could, except by some fortunate combination of circumstances, obtain any very material success over a well-organized and well-commanded force of 56,000 infantry in a country like Virginia. Grant was not going to be strong enough to force Lee out of his positions by detaching portions of his army to operate on his communications, as Sherman was going to do in his Atlanta campaign. And every attempt of Grant to drive Lee by main force out of his intrenchments was going to cost us at least two for one, so that the margin now existing in our favor would speedily become reduced to a nullity, and reinforcements, which should have originally formed *part of the army*, would be imperatively needed to keep up a comparatively useless numerical superiority. I say "a comparatively useless numerical superiority" advisedly; for where the strength of a numerically weaker adversary is doubled or quadrupled by reason of the nature of the country or by intrenchments, a numerical superiority, to be good for anything, should be large enough to enable the stronger army, by manœuvring upon the communications of the weaker one, to force it from point to point, until it can either be attacked with a good chance of success, or else compelled to take the burden of attack upon itself to preserve its communications. Anything less than this is comparatively useless; in fact, it tempts the general commanding the large force to fritter away his superior numbers in assaults upon an enemy in position and intrenched, from which he can expect little, and in which he is sure to lose heavily.

General Grant, it will be remembered, reserved to himself the general direction of the campaign. It was for him to say where the army should go, when the army should fight, and, practically, how the army should fight; that is, with what portions of the army any particular attacks should be made. On the other hand, he proposed that General Meade should make all the arrangements necessary for the carrying out of

his wishes and should charge himself personally with the direction of the troops on the march and in action. I think I am warranted in saying that this arrangement worked badly. Neither General Grant nor General Meade had his full share of responsibility for the conduct of the operations ; neither officer carried the full amount of the legitimate responsibility of a general commanding an army. It was impossible for Grant to give such intelligent and careful orders in regard to the direction and management of the army as if he had been the only general in charge of it. It was impossible for Meade to feel a deep sense of personal responsibility for the success of operations which he himself had not planned. The two officers acted indeed in entire harmony throughout the campaign ; but as it was for one of them to order what the other was to do, and as the other did only what the first had ordered, many things were ordered which could not be done, and many things were done which ought not to have been ordered.

With this inadequate force of veterans, this large infusion of raw troops in fresh organizations, this new and untried arrangement of a general commanding all the armies of the country accompanying two distinct armies,— the Army of the Potomac and the 9th corps, each under its own independent commander,— in a campaign planned by himself and to be executed by them with a very imperfect knowledge of the previous campaigns of the Army of the Potomac, and a very inadequate notion of the strength of the Army of Northern Virginia, General Grant entered upon his new campaign. His policy, as we have seen, was to hammer continually ; but even if his policy had been theoretically sound, the army of Lee was not the army on which to put such a policy into operation, at least with the force which Grant commanded.

The first operation of the campaign was of course to cross the Rapidan. There seems to have been some little doubt as to the relative merits of crossing above or below Lee's army ;

but it was finally and wisely decided to cross below. Accordingly at midnight of the 3d of May the 2d corps, preceded by Gregg's cavalry division, crossed at Ely's Ford and moved to Chancellorsville; while the 5th corps, preceded by Wilson's cavalry division, crossed at Germanna Ford and moved to the Old Wilderness Tavern at the intersection of the Germanna Plank Road with the Orange and Fredericksburg Pike. The 6th corps followed the 5th corps, and, having crossed the river, halted. One division of cavalry was retained to guard the trains which crossed at Ely's and adjacent fords; and as it was not practicable for all the wagons to cross on the 4th, the three great corps remained where they were, protecting them against possible attack, until the morning of the 5th. Meantime Burnside, whose corps had been for some days guarding the railroad between Culpeper and Washington, was ordered to join the main body by a forced march.

The region into which our army had now entered was known as the Wilderness. It was not an ordinary wooded country. It was covered with a tangled and almost impenetrable undergrowth, in which it was well-nigh impossible to handle large bodies of troops. It consisted of a succession of thickets with a very few open spaces. Running through it from west to east was the Orange Pike, and, a mile or two south of that, the Orange Plank Road. These roads starting from Orange Court House, running in a direction generally parallel, come together a short distance west of Chancellorsville. In the Wilderness they are about a couple of miles apart. The road from Germanna Ford which the 5th corps had taken intersected the Pike close to the Tavern. Pursuing the Germanna Road further to the south, we strike the Orange Plank; and very near this, the Brock Road, which is almost a continuation of the Germanna Plank, leads to Todd's Tavern and Spottsylvania Court House.

It was of the first importance that Grant should get his army out of the Wilderness at once. It was no place for him

to fight in. None but veterans could stand any chance in those bewildering thickets. Further to the south, at Spottsylvania, and further to the west, beyond Parker's Store, the country was more open.

But Grant, as we have seen, was delayed by the trains consisting of some 4000 wagons, and no progress was made on the 4th of May.

On the 5th the march was resumed. The 2d corps, preceded by the cavalry, was to take a circuitous route through Todd's Tavern out on the Catharpin Road, — a road southerly of the Orange Plank, and of the same general direction, — towards Shady Grove Church. The 5th corps was to move out on the Pike and Plank, and occupy Parker's Store, opening communications with Hancock on the south. The 6th corps was to proceed to the Wilderness Tavern. The 9th corps was to join the army as soon as possible.

Meantime General Lee, who had observed the movement of the army, determined to attack it while it was yet in the Wilderness, hoping no doubt to repeat the experience of the year before, when his audacity and enterprise at Chancellorsville had proved too much for General Hooker. Unfortunately for him, Longstreet was some distance away, but Ewell and Hill were available for immediate action. Ewell consequently pushed his way along the Pike, and Hill along the Plank Road; nevertheless Lee did not desire to bring on a battle before Longstreet could come up. He wished merely to detain our army in the Wilderness until the next day, when he expected to have his troops all in hand.

No sooner, however, did Warren's pickets report the enemy on the Pike than Grant and Meade ordered that officer to attack with his whole corps. It is no secret that the best officers of the 5th corps urged that the attack should be deferred at least until the 6th corps had got up on the right. But nothing would do but to attack where they were, supports or no supports, connections or no connections. And gallantly

the 5th corps went in. They broke some of the enemy's brigades, but finally all their divisions were either flanked or turned, and the corps as a whole was repulsed with very serious loss in men, besides two guns.

Contemporaneously with this movement, Getty's division of the 6th corps had been hurried down the Germanna Plank Road, to its intersection with the Orange Plank Road, our cavalry having reported that Hill was marching up that road from Parker's Store. Hancock was sent for in haste from the neighborhood of Todd's Tavern, to take position at the intersection of the Brock Road with the Orange Plank. Before he could get up, however, Getty, in accordance with the spirit which prevailed that day at headquarters, was ordered in alone, as if with one division he would be doing wisely to take the offensive against Hill's whole corps. Fortunately, however, for him, Hancock came up soon, and the fight went on during the afternoon rather to our advantage, though our losses were heavy.

During the afternoon, the 6th corps came up, formed on the right of the 5th, and was ordered to attack the enemy. After severe losses we were repulsed. The enemy had intrenched themselves. In fact, both sides threw up works whenever there was an opportunity to do so. This closed the fighting on the 5th of May.

In spite of the bloody repulse of the 5th and 6th corps during this day's fight, it was thought that there was a fair chance for success on our extreme left, where General Hancock was in charge of the operations. There was good reason for this opinion; for not only had Hill's troops been evidently much shaken by the fighting on the afternoon of the 5th, but the fact that the 5th corps was at the close of the day quite a distance farther out than the 2d seemed to open the possibility of throwing a force from the left of the 5th corps upon the Plank Road to take Hill in flank and rear. Accordingly Burnside was directed to start at two in the morning and to take

position between Warren and Hancock, with the object of gaining Chewning's, where was an open space of ground, just to the north of the Plank Road. But the operation prescribed to Burnside was a difficult one for any officer or any troops to execute ; and the mistake of relying on such assistance as the newly organized 9th corps could render in such a mortal combat as this must have been apparent before the day was over. Yet it was all important that Hancock should be adequately sustained, for not only was there, so far as could be seen, open to him the possibility of overthrowing Hill's exhausted troops, but it was absolutely necessary to hold the junction of the Brock Road and the Orange Plank against Longstreet, who was known to be approaching. This was the principal tactical manœuvre of the Battle of the Wilderness ; Hancock, with the 2d corps, assisted by Getty's division of the 6th and Wadsworth's of the 5th, was to overwhelm Hill before Longstreet could arrive, and also to hold the left of the position of the army against the formidable attack which might reasonably be looked for so soon as Longstreet should have reported to General Lee.

Hancock, Getty, and Wadsworth, without waiting for Burnside, attacked promptly at five in the morning, and after a fierce resistance drove Hill in confusion towards Parker's Store for a mile or more. Then it became necessary to re-form the lines. While this was being done, Longstreet's presence was discovered. Hancock sent back to the Brock Road for the balance of his command ; but so disquieting were the reports there of the approach of Longstreet up that road, which would have been a repetition of the celebrated manœuvre of Stonewall Jackson the year before, that General Barlow's division, one of the best in the army, was retained at the corner of the Brock Road. Deprived of this reliance, Hancock sends for Burnside, but that officer has not yet been able to put his troops through the tangled woods. Then Longstreet, skillfully throwing a force south of the Plank Road, takes our troops

there in the flank, and, despite the brave and persistent efforts of Hancock, Wadsworth, Webb, and other gallant officers, the troops are forced back by noon to where they started from at five o'clock in the morning. In this fight Wadsworth was mortally, and Longstreet severely, wounded.

On our centre and right, Sedgwick and Warren, in obedience to positive orders, had at five o'clock attacked the enemy's works in their front, and, as might have been expected, were repulsed with severe loss. Yet on hearing of Hancock's need of reinforcements, they were again ordered to repeat their assaults; and it was not till Hancock had been forced back and he had lost all the ground and the prestige that he had won in the early morning, that Warren and Sedgwick were instructed to strengthen their own works so as to have troops to spare for assistance to Hancock,—an order that should have been given them at day-break. There does not seem to have been any excess of good judgment in the handling of the army in this Battle of the Wilderness.

At 2 P. M. Burnside made his appearance, and pushed his troops in between the 2d and 5th corps. He was ordered to attack at six in the afternoon, and similar orders were sent to Hancock. But soon after four, the enemy, having re-formed, made a vigorous and determined assault upon Hancock's position, now fortunately intrenched, at the Brock Road. Part of Mott's division, however, broke, and the enemy's colors were planted on our breastworks. But the 2d corps could not be beaten out of a good position, and Carroll's brigade speedily recovered the ground.

While this was going on, Burnside attacked the enemy in his front, but, after meeting a fair amount of success, was forced back to his original position.

Finally, at dusk, the enemy turned the right flank of the 6th corps, and captured a number of prisoners, among whom were Generals Seymour and Shaler. But their advantage

was but temporary; they were soon obliged to retire in confusion.

During both days our cavalry were actively engaged in protecting our flanks and skirmishing with the enemy's cavalry.

The Battle of the Wilderness was unquestionably one of the fiercest struggles of this or of any war. Almost all the troops in both armies were engaged. Our loss amounted to 2265 killed, 10,220 wounded, and 2902 missing — total 15,387.¹ I do not see how the enemy's loss can have been less than 10,000 men. Ours was much the larger, because we were generally the attacking party. Whether it would have been wiser to have awaited Lee's assaults behind our intrenchments is an important question. It seems pretty certain that we gained nothing, and lost a great deal, by our attacks on the right with the 5th and 6th corps. It seems equally clear that Hancock's attack on the left had a fair chance of success. What was needed to make it successful was more troops. I have already pointed out Grant's insufficient supply of infantry.

One thing is clear, however, that it was plainly Lee's true policy to attack, because he had, for all he knew, a chance of defeating the campaign in the outset. It is true he had no right to calculate on another Hooker. But it was worth trying. On the other hand, we had no such possibility in view as this.

Could Grant have avoided a battle in the Wilderness, he doubtless would have done so, as the nature of the country rendered it impossible for him to use his artillery, and the tangled underbrush was the worst possible field for the special military traits of the Northern soldiers. Accordingly it seems to follow that, unless by assuming the offensive, he thought he could break the force of an attack which was sure to be

¹ The returns, 67 W. R. 133, published in 1891, give 3383 killed, 12,037 wounded, 3835 missing, a total of 17,666. — Ed.

made, it was clearly his policy not to take the tactical offensive in the Wilderness. If this be so, then he had no sufficient reason for the isolated attack prescribed to Warren on the morning of the 5th, nor for the repeated assaults on the enemy's intrenchments which Warren and Sedgwick were ordered to make on the 6th. But when he knew that Longstreet was purposing, as soon as he could arrive, a vigorous onslaught on our left, it may have been judicious to order Hancock to begin by attacking and breaking up Hill, especially as the latter was not intrenched. One thing should be remarked,—neither army captured and held any works on either day.

Both armies were pretty well exhausted, but to General Grant belongs the credit of accepting the rôle of an invader and taking the initiative. I have not time to detail how our base of operations was skillfully shifted from the Orange and Alexandria Railroad to Fredericksburg and Acquia Creek, nor how we just managed to lose, without the fault of any one, being the first at Spottsylvania Court House. Suffice it to say that twenty-four hours had just elapsed after the battle when the army began its march, on the evening of the 7th; that on the morning of the 8th it was found that the enemy had preceded us; that heavy skirmishing took place the 8th and 9th, in which we lost one of our best officers in General Sedgwick, commanding the 6th corps; General Wright, the present chief of engineers, succeeding him.

It was found that the Army of Northern Virginia occupied a line everywhere strongly intrenched, "having artillery throughout, with flank fire wherever practicable," and the approaches to which were generally obstructed by slashings or by regular abatis. "With such intrenchments as these," says General Humphreys, "the strength of an army sustaining an attack was more than quadrupled, provided they had force enough to man the intrenchments well. In fact there

is scarcely any measure by which to gauge the increased strength thereby gained."¹

Then commenced a series of assaults just such as we have seen prescribed to Warren and Sedgwick at the Wilderness, assaults of such a character that no troops in the world can be expected to succeed in them unless they are wrought up to a high pitch of enthusiasm, unless they are exceptionally well officered, unless they are picked out for this task of honor and danger, unless they are sure of being supported as soon as their valor shall have planted the flag of their country on the hostile parapet.

Listen to this description of an assault on the 10th of May, from the accurate, dispassionate pen of General Humphreys: "General Warren, wearing his full uniform, proceeded to assault the enemy's position at once with Crawford's and Cutler's divisions, and Webb's and Carroll's brigades of Gibbon's division under Gibbon's orders. Opposite the right of this attacking force the wood in front of the enemy's intrenchments was dense and filled with a low growth of dead cedar-trees, whose hard, sharp-pointed branches, interlaced and pointed in all directions, made it very difficult for the troops to advance under the heavy artillery and musketry fire they met at the outset. They emerged into the open ground near the intrenchments with disordered ranks and under a heavy artillery and musketry fire, part direct, part flanking, that swept the whole ground, but went forward some to the abatis, others to the crest of the parapet, but were all driven back with heavy loss."²

Such work as this is no part of the ordinary duty of a soldier. It is exceptional in its character, and any attempt to make it part of the daily task is sure to result in failure.

General Humphreys proceeds in his narrative: "General Hancock was ordered to renew the assault at half-past 6 P. M., but under orders deferred it till 7 P. M., when he attacked

¹ Va. Camp. 75. ² Ibid. 81.

with Birney's and Gibbon's divisions, part of the 5th corps uniting with him, but with no more success than the preceding attempt."¹

It hardly seems possible that those who ordered the first attack should have expected it to succeed. And that they should have expected the second one to succeed is simply incredible. Observe, it was made largely with the identical troops that made the first assault. Under such circumstances men must feel that they count for but very little at headquarters.

But it is not only this which is to be noticed, though this, as affecting the morale of the troops, is important enough. It is what may be called the military extravagance of such performances which especially challenges our attention. It is the wastefulness of such operations. Here, you observe, is not a battle going on all along the line, which the capture of this particular position may decide, like the capture of the Great Redoubt at Borodino, nor is it the breach in the walls of a fortified town, which, if crowned, opens the way inevitably to the capture of the place. Nothing of the sort. Here is simply a portion, say half or three fourths of a mile long, in a long extent of intrenchments seven or eight miles in extent. There is no pretense that its capture is going to be followed by any very considerable advantage. There are no thousands or tens of thousands of troops, ready and waiting, to be poured in the moment when Warren or Hancock and their brave men shall have struggled through the cedar-trees, escaped the cross-fire of artillery and musketry, and planted the stars and stripes on the enemy's parapet. Nothing of the sort. The most that was hoped for was the isolated success of capturing a few rods of works, a few guns, and a few hundred prisoners. To me, this seems wasteful in the highest degree. When there really comes an opportunity to accomplish something of vital importance, where are the men to do

¹ Va. Camp. 82.

it, if men's lives are so wantonly expended in these minor operations?

Two, however, of the assaults at Spottsylvania were brilliantly successful.

On this same day in which we have seen the repulse of Warren and Hancock, an attack was ordered on the front of the 6th corps, which was intrusted to Colonel Upton, one of the most gallant and capable of the younger officers in the army. He commanded a brigade in Russell's division, and was the same officer who had in the preceding November captured the tête-de-pont at Rappahannock Station, taking almost an entire brigade prisoners. The force at his disposal consisted of twelve regiments, all good troops, conspicuous among which were the 5th, 6th, and 7th Maine regiments. The ground was examined as carefully as circumstances permitted, not only by Upton himself, and by his able division commander, Russell, but by the twelve colonels whom Upton, with a care commendable but very unusual, took pains should understand, as far as possible, exactly what the task before them was. Precise instructions were given as to the disposition of the troops after the works should be entered. Every possible precaution was taken to insure success. Fortunately, the storming column — for such it not only really was, but by the exceptional wisdom of its commanders, it was treated as such — could be massed in the woods, out of sight, only 200 yards from the enemy. At the given signal the troops rushed forward with a cheer, under a very heavy fire of musketry and artillery, and without firing a shot crowned the parapet. But the resolute men behind the works refused to budge. They "sat upright in their pits with bayonets ready to impale the first who should leap over the works. A hand-to-hand fight ensued. Our men held their pieces at arm's length and fired downward, or hurled their pieces upon the enemy, pinning them to the ground. . . . The struggle lasted but a few seconds, and our men swept over the works, expanding to the right and left, overran

the battery and the second line of works, and made an opening in the enemy's line of half a mile in width, ready for the supporting force which ought to have come up on the left, but which did not arrive."¹ This supporting force was Mott's division of the 2d corps, which had been placed under the orders of General Wright. Its failure to come up has never been satisfactorily accounted for. Why this division was selected for this important task is not obvious, to say the least. It had given way under the attack on our lines on the Brock Road on the 6th. It is hardly necessary to say that such an assault as this requires at least as much judgment and pains in the selection and disposition of the supporting force as in the selection and disposition of the column of attack. Mott was a mile or so on Upton's left and rear, near the Brown house, and ought to have come up in time. But for want probably of definite and positive instructions, or perhaps from a lack of energy and promptitude, Mott failed to come up, and Upton, who had captured 1200 prisoners and several flags, and had successfully maintained his position till dark, was reluctantly compelled to retire from the works he had so gallantly won.

The next day, the 11th, was spent in making preparations for the other assault to which we have adverted.

This was to be made upon the northerly faces of the great Salient in the enemy's works, on the west face of which the previous attack had been made. The bulk of the 2d corps, under the gallant and energetic Hancock, was ordered up from the right of the line to take position on the left of the 6th corps. The first division, one of the best in the army, led by Barlow, a man of recognized courage and capacity, was selected to make the attack. It was to be supported by the other divisions of the corps, those of Gibbon, Birney, and Mott. The march on the night of the 11th was a dismal one: it rained steadily; the road was bad; it led through woods and marshes;

¹ *Ante*, p. 225.

at times the staff officers who were directing the leading division seemed at a loss to find the true road or rather cart path conducting to the position indicated. At last, weary and bewildered, the troops bivouacked on the wet ground. The orders were to attack at four in the morning, and Barlow was to lead the way. No one seemed to know the lay of the land, or how far distant the enemy's line was. But Barlow was not the man to trust to luck when there was information to be had. Leaving his sleeping division, he went himself to the picket line of Mott's division, which had been, as we have seen, in this vicinity for the past two days. Here he stumbled upon a gallant and intelligent officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Waldo Merriam of the 16th Massachusetts, who fell bravely fighting the next day, and obtained from him the facts required before he lay down to take rest.

The next morning his division, heavily massed, pursued its path through the woods, straight for the apex of the Salient. Some of Gibbon's men cheered. But the enemy had been on the alert, and received us with a steady fire of musketry. Fortunately for us, their batteries, at the moment when we charged, were only just returning from their left, where General Lee had ordered them on the mistaken apprehension that his left was about to be turned. Hence but two guns opened upon us. The troops of Barlow and Birney, supported by those of Gibbon and Mott, swept over the breastworks, capturing all the troops lying before them on the front and on both sides of the apex of the Salient, comprising the whole of Edward Johnson's division, some 4000 men, together with some twenty guns and thirty standards. It was a great sweep and a brilliant success.

Pursuing their way in a southerly direction through the middle of the Salient, the troops struck another line of works running east and west, by which they were checked.

It is needless to say that there was a great deal of unavoidable disorder in the attacking forces. The ease with which the

works were overrun showed that the heavy massing of Barlow's division was a mistake, and, in fact, too many troops joined in the assault. It would have been better to have had one or perhaps two divisions in reserve, bringing them up quietly in good order, and relieving the troops who were in the disorder and excitement inseparable from a successful attack. As it was, however, the whole 2d corps was in or close to the Salient, and a large part of it was in a greater or less state of confusion, notwithstanding the energetic efforts of their officers to re-form the lines.

It did not take the veterans of Lee's army long to rouse themselves to a perception of the danger that threatened them. Had we been able to pursue our attack, the army of Lee would have been cut in two. Had Hancock been able to restore complete order, to sweep down the east and west faces of the Salient and connect with the 6th corps on the one hand and the 9th corps on the other, the result of this day would have been possibly a decisive defeat for the Army of Northern Virginia. But apart from the confusion which prevailed on our side, there were other causes which stood in the way of our making this a crushing defeat for our adversaries. They were, after all, behind the interior line of works facing north; moreover, their works on the right and left of this were strongly held; no further surprise was possible. In fact, so far were the Confederates from being demoralized that they at once rushed furiously to attack the invaders and attempted to recover all the lost ground. The disordered troops of Hancock found it impossible to maintain themselves in the open ground around the McCool house; they fell back to the very works they had just captured, crossing them and holding them against the repeated and persistent assaults of their former owners. On the westerly face of the Angle, for about the space of a third of a mile, these assaults were the most terrible and the most sanguinary. Our batteries from the open ground to the north played over the heads of our own men upon the

enemy's lines. The trees, large, fine shade-trees, of which there was quite a grove on this part of the enemy's line, were killed by the terrible fire of artillery and musketry. In one place a large tree was actually cut down by musket bullets, at a height of about four feet above the ground, where its trunk was almost at its thickest.

The enemy poured into this bloody inclosure all the troops that they could spare without weakening their left, which it was absolutely indispensable for them to hold. The men fought with wonderful audacity and persistency. Often the combatants would be separated only by the captured works, and bayonet wounds were given and received, and men were actually pulled over and taken prisoners. It was a fearful and horrible fight. Well might the west angle in these lines be termed the "*Bloody Angle*."

Meantime, assaults were made on both sides of the Salient; on the eastern side by Burnside, on the western by Warren and Wright. Colonel Upton's decimated brigade again took an active part in the fight of this day, and the only one out of seven captains in the 5th Maine who had escaped the dangers of the successful assault on the 10th was killed on the 12th. But nothing was accomplished by these side attacks, and the end of the day found us in possession of that part only of the line which we had carried at four o'clock in the morning. But our trophies were numerous and unmistakable,—4000 men, twenty pieces of cannon, thirty battle-flags.

In the morning it was found that the enemy had retired to a new line of works, which crossed the base of the Salient south of the Harrison house.

The losses this day in killed, wounded, and missing are stated at 6820 on our side; the enemy must have lost in the Salient, though not elsewhere, nearly as many in killed and wounded; and including their great loss in prisoners, their effective force must have been decreased by about 9000 or 10,000 men. The advantage of the day was clearly with us;

and though Generals Grant and Meade doubtless expected a more decisive result, they had good cause to feel proud of the achievements of the army.

For some six or seven days more the army remained at Spottsylvania, endeavoring to find some similar weak place in the enemy's lines. During this time several costly assaults were made, into the particulars of which it is not worth our while to go this evening, but without any result except in loss to the Federal side.

The total casualties at Spottsylvania, in killed, wounded, and missing, amounted to 17,723.¹ This number is exclusive of the sick, and of those regiments whose time for service had expired.

Finding it impossible to accomplish anything of consequence at Spottsylvania, General Grant determined to move around Lee's right, in the direction of the North Anna. It was probably the intention to seize the crossings of the river before Lee arrived; but although the army was skillfully handled, this was found impossible. In fact, although the army crossed both above and below that portion of the south bank of the river which was held by Lee's army, it was impossible to effect anything by any movement that seemed within the bounds of possibility. Lee's left wing rested on Little River on its left and on the North Anna on its right. His centre was on the North Anna River. Both wings were strongly intrenched, and neither could be turned. Hence there was nothing to do but to undertake another turning move, which was done without having expended any lives in useless assaults. The only encounters at or near the North Anna had resulted in our favor. Two brigades, those of Pierce and Egan, of the 2d corps, had carried the enemy's works on the north side of the river. Warren had successfully repelled a serious attack made upon him after he had crossed. The army was, in fact, in good spirits when it left the North Anna en route for the Pamunkey.

¹ 18,399, 67 W. R. 149. — Ed.

On the 24th of May the cavalry corps, under General Sheridan, rejoined the army, after a raid in which he had destroyed several miles of railroad track and some cars and engines, and had got very near Richmond. But although he had fought a severe action, in which J. E. B. Stuart was defeated and killed, he had accomplished nothing of any great moment. Doubtless these raids, of which some of our generals were so fond, caused some inconvenience to the enemy; but the policy of sending off troops when fighting is in prospect cannot be defended. General Grant needed in his struggle every man and every gun he could muster. It is true that, as cavalry, Sheridan's force could be of but little use in a wooded country, but as mounted infantry they might be of very considerable use in any kind of a country. Twelve thousand good troops, under such an officer as Sheridan, possessed of the power of reaching their destination more speedily than the rest of the army, constitute a force not to be lightly despised. We shall soon see how useful they were in the operations which took place on the Totopotomoy and near Cold Harbor.

On the 26th General Grant determined to withdraw from the North Anna and to cross the Pamunkey, thus approaching Richmond. He does not seem to have had a very definite idea of accomplishing anything by this move besides finding a new set of intrenchments to attack. However, the march was, as usual, skillfully made; the bulk of the cavalry preceded the columns and crossed the Pamunkey on the 27th, the remainder guarded the trains, assisted by Ferrero's black division of the 9th corps. The Pamunkey was successfully crossed at and above Hanover Town on the 28th of May by the four corps, and on the same day Sheridan, after a spirited fight, secured the important position of Hawes's Shop, from which the principal roads to Richmond either take their departure or are easily accessible.

These principal roads are three in number. The northerly

one runs entirely on the north bank of the Totopotomoy, by Enon Church and Polly Hundley's Corner, crosses the Virginia Central Railroad, and the Chickahominy at Meadow Bridge, and enters Richmond on the north. This is known as the Meadow Bridge Road. To reach the second, or Bethesda Church Road, one must go from Hawes's Shop towards Old Church, and, shortly after crossing the Totopotomoy, turn to the right, passing by Bethesda Church and through Mechanicsville, and crossing the Chickahominy at Mechanicsville Bridge. The third, or Cold Harbor Road, starts from Old Church, and, passing through Old Cold Harbor, New Cold Harbor, and Gaines's Mill, crosses the Chickahominy at New Bridge.

Midway between these last two roads is a road on the south side of the Totopotomoy, which runs in a southwesterly direction by Pole Green Church from a point on the Bethesda Church Road about a couple of miles northeast of Bethesda Church, to Shady Grove Church, where it joins a road from Atlee's Station to Mechanicsville. We will call this the Old Church Road, as it connected Atlee's Station with Old Church.

A road also runs south from Polly Hundley's Corner through Hundley's Corner to the Bethesda Church Road, crossing this last-mentioned road near Pole Green Church. This we will call the Pole Green Church Road.

One would have supposed that it would have been General Grant's plan, on crossing the Pamunkey, to aim at something more than merely discovering new lines of intrenchments at which he might hurl his army; in fact to gain some position threatening Lee's communications, or even Richmond itself. One would have supposed that General Grant had by this time had enough of attacks, and that he would have seen how extremely desirable it would be for him to put himself in such a position that Lee would be obliged to attack him. But in fact nothing of the sort seems to have entered Grant's head.

His only idea seems to have been, on having crossed the Pamunkey, to find out as soon as he could where Lee's intrenchments were, and then to assault them.

But in reality there was a far better rôle than this for Grant to play. Lee was almost as much afraid of Grant's new movement being directed against the railroad, by which he obtained most of his supplies, as against Richmond; he therefore held on to the railroad with his left, which he brought down to Atlee's Station, in the neighborhood of which he placed Hill's corps, while he threw out Longstreet's corps, under Anderson, in the vicinity of Shady Grove Church, and, on his right, Ewell's corps under Early. The latter officer tells us that he placed his troops in position, covering the Pole Green Church Road coming down from the north, and the Old Church Road coming in from the east, with his right resting on Beaver Dam Creek. Lee's line thus faced north and northeast, from Atlee's Station to Hundley's Corner. It will be observed that the enemy's right did not reach the Bethesda Church Road, and that, had General Grant concentrated a force upon Early, manœuvring by the Bethesda Church Road, he could probably have doubled up his right long before either Anderson or Hill could have come to his assistance; or Grant could have observed Early with a strong force, and, passing by him, have carried his army down to Cold Harbor and New Bridge, in which position Lee would probably have felt obliged to be the attacking party. The situation and movements of the two armies were in fact in some respects curiously like, and in other respects unlike the situation and movements in the Wilderness at the beginning of the month. There, as here, it was an object for Grant to pass by Lee; but there he could not do it, for Lee was marching toward him in a direction at right angles with the roads on which he must go. And he could not greatly hurry, for he had to protect his trains. Here, on the other hand, Lee was perfectly quiescent, and facing north, while it was Grant's

policy to march south. Moreover the trains were all safe behind the Pamunkey, and well guarded.

All depended on keeping the initiative. But this advantage Grant willfully lost, making here the first and almost the only important strategical mistake of this campaign. He actually occupied the 29th and 30th in finding out where Lee's army was, and in attacking him in position. He even sent two divisions of the 6th corps to Hanover Court House, to see if he was not there. Then there was a wearisome repetition on the Totopotomoy of the aimless assaults at the Wilderness and Spottsylvania. Hancock, Warren, Wright, Burnside, essayed in vain to break Lee's formidable lines. Sometimes a few hundred men would be swept in from the skirmish line or the nearest rifle-pits, but no impression was made on the main position.

Moreover the armies by this method of proceeding got so interlocked that there was no possibility of further manœuvring for position. All that could be done was, time after time, to remove the corps on the extreme right and place it on the extreme left of the line, a proceeding always observed and sometimes anticipated by the enemy. But this continuous wrestling was sure to culminate in a great battle.

Meantime Baldy Smith's corps, the 18th, was sent for from Bermuda Hundred; and Sheridan's cavalry having captured Old Cold Harbor, which was some short distance to the left of our line, an attempt was made to concentrate the 6th and 18th corps there, to effect a lodgment on the enemy's extreme right. Owing to delays for which neither of the officers commanding these corps was responsible, this concentration was not effected until the enemy had intrenched in front of our troops. A determined assault was made June 1, but was repulsed, after some temporary success, with great slaughter. Then the 2d corps was sent for from the extreme right, and took up position on the 2d of June on the extreme left. It was intended that the three corps should assault on the 2d,

but owing to various causes this could not be done. All this while the enemy were concentrating and perfecting their intrenchments. It was impossible to manœuvre further, as we were so near the Chickahominy, and it was impossible now to take the enemy unawares. Still Grant was unwilling to leave the neighborhood of the Chickahominy without making a serious and determined effort to break the enemy's lines. The army was now facing west; the 2d corps on the left, the 6th corps on its right, at Cold Harbor, the 18th corps next, then the 5th corps, and lastly the 9th corps, the right of which was on the Bethesda Church Road and was refused.

On the other side, Early held the left, then Longstreet, then Hoke's division, which had come up from Petersburg, then Breckinridge, who had been sent for, from the Shenandoah Valley, and then A. P. Hill.

The attack was ordered for the morning of the 3d of June; but there seems to have been nothing special, either in the instructions given to the officers or troops, or in the preparations, or in the expectations entertained of its result either by the generals or the army, to distinguish it from so many previous attacks. It was an attack along the whole line. Warren, it is true, could not probably join in it, as his front was covered by a swamp; and it was not expected probably that Burnside should take a very active part in it. But the 2d, 6th, and 18th corps were to attack simultaneously at half-past four in the morning. There was no corps in reserve.

The attack was promptly and gallantly made, but as all the world knows, it was an utter failure. The division of Barlow indeed entered the enemy's works and captured two or three guns and two or three hundred prisoners, but was speedily driven out. Partial attacks, however, continued to be made from point to point for a few hours, but the main assault had taken place and had failed in half an hour. Our loss

in this battle, if it may be called a battle, had been upwards of 7300 men. But our previous loss from the time we crossed the Pamunkey had exceeded 5600 men, most of whom were thrown away in comparatively useless assaults. The total loss was thus nearly 13,000 men.

It is difficult to find any justification for the battle of Cold Harbor. Here was an enemy able to hold as long a line as our own; in fact Early on their extreme left actually felt strong enough to attack Burnside; everywhere in front of the three corps which were to make the principal assault, the enemy were known to be in force and strongly intrenched. Where, then, was there any rational expectation, or hope even, of driving him from his position? Suppose even that a single corps had acquired possession of the works in their front; could it be supposed, that, decimated and disordered as they would inevitably be by such an assault, they could do more than simply hold what they might have gained? The battle of Cold Harbor is in truth the most terrible instance which this terrible campaign affords of the folly of fighting with no reasonable chance of success and with a dead certainty of a heavy loss. Now a heavy loss means this, — that when you next get an opportunity you may not be strong enough to improve it.

The losses of the army down to the crossing of the James were as follows :

At the Wilderness	.	.	.	.	.	.	15,387
At Spottsylvania	.	.	.	.	.	.	17,723
At North Anna	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,973
On the Totopotomoy	.	.	.	.	.	.	3,022
At Cold Harbor June 1	.	.	.	.	.	.	2,625
At Cold Harbor June 3	.	.	.	.	.	.	7,323
At Cold Harbor to June 12	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,159
Sick, sent home, about	.	.	.	.	.	.	10,000
Total	.	.	.	.	.	.	59,212 ¹

¹ 52,789 killed, wounded, and missing, 67 W. R. 188. — Ed.

The army was further diminished, by the expiration of the term of service of many regiments, to the extent of about 6000 men, making a total loss of about 65,000 men.

To balance this, the army had received reinforcements, exclusive of the 18th corps, to the amount of about 40,000 men. The net loss was therefore about 25,000 men.

General Lee's losses during the campaign could hardly have been less than 25,000 men. He had received, however, so far as I can discover, only about 10,000 reinforcements. His net loss was therefore about 15,000 men.

The repulse at Cold Harbor had a most disheartening effect both on the army and on the public. It seemed to many as if General Grant was at the end of his resources. But General Grant was in no way disheartened nor was he in the least affected by the tremendous experiences of this campaign. He at once went to work, with as cool a head as he ever applied to any military problem in his life, to effect the crossing of the James and to capture Petersburg.

The movement began on the 12th of June. One by one the corps were withdrawn from their positions at Cold Harbor. Smith's corps was sent to Bermuda Hundred by water, Hancock crossed the James at Windmill Point on a pontoon bridge. These two corps were to take Petersburg. Smith came up at noon of the 15th in front of the outer defenses. Hancock, who had received no definite instructions, an omission it is not easy to explain, halted for rations, and finally joined Smith at six in the evening. By this time Smith had carried by assault the works on the outer line, strong in construction, but inadequately manned. There was nothing between these works and Petersburg at that moment. But the evening wore on, and the night, and the orders Hancock gave for the recommencement of the attack at dawn were for some unaccountable reason not carried out. However, the next day more troops arrived, the 9th corps, and part of the 6th. On the morning of that day, the 16th, the 2d corps attacked the

enemy's works, and carried a portion of the lines, suffering, however, considerable loss.

On the next morning the 5th corps arrived. The whole army was now up.

It was fortunate for the Confederates that the officer in command at Petersburg was a man of unusual capacity for conducting a defense. Beauregard, an engineer of unquestionable talent, had in the early days of this campaign inflicted a severe defeat on Butler's army, and had caused that general to retire ingloriously to Bermuda Hundred, from which he never afterwards emerged. Beauregard suspected from the first days of June that our object was Petersburg, and he urged this upon Lee with his customary persistency. But he had a way of presenting his views, even when sound, in a form repellent to the minds of most of his coadjutors. Endowed with an active imagination, he was continually making projects, urging their adoption, and predicting all sorts of good results if his advice should be taken. Even when the steps which he counseled were wise, his imagination ran away with him, and he always alarmed his hearers when he came to prophesying the results of his policy. His diagnosis was almost always sound, but his prognosis, in case his advice should be taken, was almost always too favorable. Hence his recommendations did not have the weight that should have been accorded to them.

On this occasion he reiterated to General Lee that Grant's object was Petersburg. He had with him on the 16th only the divisions of Hoke and Bushrod Johnson, with a few cavalry, a force of some 13,000 to 14,000 men. He begged Lee to send him large reinforcements, or, better still, to come to Petersburg himself. But Lee had been completely deceived by the very skillful manœuvres which Grant had made on the north side of the James in the neighborhood of Charles City Cross Roads, and could not feel certain that Grant did not intend to move directly upon Richmond. Hence he refused to move, and sent

Beauregard only one brigade, Gracie's, which raised his force to about 15,000 men.

With Hoke's and Johnson's divisions Beauregard had stoutly held the line in front of Hancock on the evening of the 16th, and had during the night again and again, with a view of deceiving us in regard to his force, endeavored to recapture the position he had lost. On the early morning of the 17th, however, Potter's division of the 9th corps captured an exposed redoubt near the Shand house, on the extreme right of their line, which had incautiously been held too long, with guns and prisoners; and the 2d corps had carried the hill on which the Hare house stood. Still these movements were isolated. No one in the Federal army recognized the enormous disparity of numbers. The ground was wooded in great part, and was unfamiliar to our people. But Grant does not seem to have been equal to the occasion. It was eminently a time for trying every expedient, and making a daring move, if any such occurred to him. It was his great chance for a great strike. With portions of the 6th and 18th corps, and the whole of the 2d, 5th, and 9th, he must have had 70,000 men at least. There was every reason to essay a turning movement by the left with the 5th corps, which was at that extremity of our line, and which had not been severely engaged at Cold Harbor; Warren might have been sent round by the Jerusalem Plank Road; and if he had been, he would have undoubtedly entered Petersburg without opposition. But nothing of the sort was attempted. Sheridan, who had in the series of operations just terminated seized Cold Harbor for us, was off on one of these useless raids. Nothing was done but to order another assault for one division of the 9th corps towards dark. This was perfectly successful. But there was no coöperation; it was a repetition of so many other similar affairs since we had crossed the Rapidan. We were at length obliged, by the arrival of reinforcements to the enemy, to retire from the captured works.

Nevertheless Beauregard's little force could not hold such an advanced line. During the night of the 17th and 18th he fell back to the heights of Petersburg, properly so called, which the Confederate army held to the close of the war.

General Meade had ordered an assault for the next morning, the 18th, at daybreak. On moving towards the enemy it was found that they had fallen back, and our troops followed their skirmish line through the woods until it was seen where they had taken position. Even then a prompt and vigorous attack would have resulted in our favor. But it was not made. It was thought necessary to make further examination of their lines, and while we were getting ready for our afternoon assault, General Lee arrived with the Army of Northern Virginia. The assault was delivered and gallantly delivered at three in the afternoon,—but, as might have been expected, it was an utter failure.

In these assaults on Petersburg we had lost 9964 men, making our total loss in killed, wounded, and missing during the campaign 59,176, to which if we add about 10,000 sick, we get a total of nearly 70,000 men.

Our army then sat down before the works of Petersburg, which were to detain us nearly ten months. Neither of the great objects of the campaign had been attained. Lee's army had not been shattered, nor had Richmond been taken. Our cavalry raids had not destroyed the Confederate lines of supply. The Virginia Central Railroad still ran undisturbed by the South Anna through Hanover Junction to Richmond. The Weldon, Danville, and South Side roads were as yet not even menaced.

The army was terribly shattered. It had lost considerably more than half of the troops that crossed the Rapidan on the 3d of May. It had accomplished nothing, save that it had killed, wounded, and captured some 30,000 men of Lee's army. It had carried out its policy of attrition, and that

was all. It had simply depleted Lee's army. It had neither disintegrated nor demoralized it.

In fact, after the battle of Cold Harbor, Lee felt himself able to spare the 2d corps under Early, and sent it to make a demonstration on Washington, of so serious a character that Grant had to dispatch the 6th and 19th corps to defend the capital. This was the result and consequence of the campaign of 1864 in Virginia.

The campaign must be pronounced a failure. Of this there can be no real question. The capture of Richmond, the surrender of Lee, were the result of quite different causes. The result of this campaign was to reduce our army in numbers and morale out of all proportion with its adversary.

The difficulty with General Grant seems to have been that he adopted at the outset, and adhered pertinaciously, to a vicious principle; that he relied on mere fighting, even when the fighting meant assaulting works without any reasonable ground of success, — or at least any reasonable ground of achieving such a success as was worth the loss sure to be incurred. Then he was in other ways wasteful of his army. "The marching," says General Humphreys, "was done chiefly at night, and the contact was so close as to require constant vigilance day and night, and allow but little time for sleep. The firing was incessant. The fatigue, the loss of sleep, the watchfulness, taxed severely the powers of endurance of both officers and men. Usually in military operations, the opposing armies come together, fight a battle, and separate again, the strain lasting only a few days. In a siege it is only a small part of the opposing troops that are close together. But with these two armies it was different. From the 5th of May, 1864, to the 9th of April, 1865, they were in constant close contact, with rare intervals of brief comparative repose."

By this course the strength of the army was constantly kept down. In none of the battles in this campaign did Grant have as many men as he needed.

One thing is certain. With any resources less than those of the United States, the campaign, as Grant conducted it, must have come to a dead halt. It was so wasteful, so thoughtless of men's lives, that it required large reinforcements, an adversary numerically much weaker, and very patient and much-enduring soldiers. It is impossible, no doubt, to commend an officer who is nervous at taking risks, who hesitates and falters when the day of battle approaches, who makes the unreasonable demand that everything be made absolutely certain before he will give the order to attack. But it is equally impossible to approve of an officer who attacks systematically, running his chance of being successful or the reverse, who does not realize the necessity of economy in the use of his resources, that he may have them all at his command on the day of a real battle. To expect a crushing victory from such a policy as Grant pursued with his army would be as futile as to expect from a turbulent, noisy river the terrible devastation of a freshet or a broken dam. Better far would it have been for Grant to have kept his army out of this close contact with the enemy, which took the spirit and vigor to such a marked degree out of his men; to have ordered fewer attacks, and taken more pains about those he did order; to have taken such pains, in fact, and made so few attacks, that when he did order an attack the troops would have known that all possible preparation had been made, and that their chief *expected* them to succeed. If the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac ever entertained such notions as this, they were speedily disenchanted. It was soon seen that attacks were the daily task, and that as often as not no thought whatever had been given to them, or any expectations whatsoever entertained in regard to their issue.

Strategically, the campaign was undoubtedly well conducted. The army was never placed in a false position; its marches were skillfully planned and admirably executed; as a rule its wants were liberally provided for and its wounded

well cared for. The march to Petersburg was a brilliant feat ; and had it been followed by a little more enterprise in the operations after arriving before the town, we should have secured a great prize.

Tactically, however, the campaign yields but few lessons, unless by way of avoidance. Everywhere we see the same burning, persistent desire to fight, to attack, in season and out of season, against intrenchments, natural obstacles, what not. This is not the temper of the great soldier. There is not a trace of it in Marlborough or Wellington. In fact neither of those generals could have conducted his campaigns a month on such a theory. They had not the requisite resources. There is nothing of the sort in the principles or practice of Napoleon. With him a battle was always a serious matter for which troops were to be husbanded, as for a supreme effort ; and though he spared no sacrifice while the occasion was in progress, he knew well the value of previous and subsequent rest and recuperation. The experience of the Army of the Potomac in this campaign was in fact a new experience for soldiers. Sacrifices were demanded every day of the rank and file of the army which had hitherto been required only occasionally, and then only from those selected for some special post of honor and danger. To lie in a new-dug rifle-pit a hundred yards from the enemy for several days under constant fire is much like the experience of the engineer troops in a siege. To rush from this rifle-pit upon the enemy's works is the act of a forlorn hope, whose gallant performance is the admiration of a storming column, itself selected for a special and dangerous service. But it is not every day that the sap is pushed forward or the breach assaulted. Yet the soldiers in the Army of the Potomac had to make these exceptional feats their daily duties. All honor to the brave men who with unwavering and steady patriotism stood up to their work and met their fate.

XVI

GRANT'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST LEE

BY

COLONEL THOMAS L. LIVERMORE

Read before the Society November 14, 1887

GRANT'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST LEE

WHEN General Grant came to the East, at the end of the third year of the war, to conduct operations against Lee in person, he took upon himself the enterprise of destroying an army composed of the best men and most seasoned veterans of the South and led by the foremost commander of the Confederacy.

Lee had twice led his army across the Potomac to invade the North, and had been defeated each time ; but he had seen the Army of the Potomac retreat from his front four times, — once from the Peninsula, once across the Rappahannock in 1862, and once again across the Rappahannock, and once across the Rapidan in 1863, — while at Mine Run in December, 1863, he showed that he remained as willing as ever to come out of his intrenchments to engage his adversary if the latter would not attack him.

Could the Confederates maintain the war but a year or two longer on the same terms, they might hope to wear out the patience of the North, whose public debt was growing at the rate of three or four million dollars a day. The party which opposed the war, harping upon our financial burdens and exaggerating the losses in battle, which were bringing mourning and distress to every hamlet in the North, was growing stronger every day ; volunteering had lagged ; the draft had been met by riots, and mercenaries (many of them of the worst type) were being sent to fill the ranks of the army ; and, in short, every day's delay augmented the perils which beset the cause of the Union. Procrastination was the only salvation for the Confederacy. Unceasing action was forced upon Grant.

It took only two days of fighting against Grant to commit Lee to the Fabian policy, and he never afterwards turned aside from it.

Grant saw that it would not do to make a campaign of mere manœuvres for position, or to draw back from the front of the enemy if he failed to engage them outside of their intrenchments, or even if our arms met with reverses. To make Lee retreat, or even to make him abandon Richmond, could not end the war. The rebel armies had to be destroyed. Nothing but the utter exhaustion of the men and resources of the South could persuade the Southerners that the Unionists of the North were mighty enough to maintain the Union. These were not the only reasons for taking and keeping the aggressive. Grant's comprehensive plan of fighting all the rebel armies at once required that hostilities should be so unrelenting against each army that neither could reinforce the other. No one of these facts can be lost sight of in estimating Grant's conduct in the campaign which began on the Rapidan in May, 1864, and ended at Appomattox Court House in April, 1865.

His critics have treated the operations between the Rapidan and the Chickahominy as if they constituted a campaign by themselves ; but if one has ever been led to take this view, he has only to read the noble Memoirs of General Grant to correct it. This great narrative, breathing the sincerity of one who submits his acts to the judgment of his fellow men as he goes to present himself before the Infinite Judge, and bearing the mark of a hand which hastens to record the truth while yet there is day, impresses us with the fact that there was one unrelenting campaign from the first gun in the Wilderness to the last gun at Appomattox Court House, a campaign which was not divided into weeks or months, and which had but two geographical limits, — the first where Lee's army was struck, and the last where it was captured, — and that when losses are counted, they are to be aggregated. The lives lost in the

Wilderness contributed directly to the surrender at Appomattox.

Through the smoke of the many battles of May and June, 1864, the calm eye of our great commander rested on the inevitable day when Lee's army, depleted, famished, worn out and discouraged, should yield to his blows and give up its existence. His unimpassioned genius forecast the ultimate destruction of his adversary as confidently as the scientist predicts the final extinction of the life of the world, and his sphinx-like face betrayed no sign of discouragement at repulse or dismay at the long roll of his losses. If we would estimate the value of his methods, we must now, as he did then, carry forward the losses of 1864 to the day of final reckoning in 1865, and then compare them, and we shall find that Grant lost but a few more and perhaps less men than Lee lost.

Mr. Ropes, in his papers upon the Wilderness campaign, delivered before us and in the Lowell Institute course, has taken a view of General Grant's conduct of this campaign which is so much at variance with that which I have been led to take that I have ventured to examine the grounds upon which his criticisms are based, and with great deference to make this record of the results of my labor. In the same connection I have also touched upon the premises of some criticisms made by General Walker in his brilliant "History of the Second Army Corps." The censures expressed by these gentlemen command attention, not only from the authority of the writers, but also because they embody the result of an investigation of all the facts contained in recent publications upon the campaign, excepting perhaps the Personal Memoirs of General Grant, which may have been published at a later date.

The most valuable compilation of the facts of this campaign which we have is the elaborate work of General Humphreys entitled "The Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65," which is a monument of faithful and accurate research, joined to the most

intimate personal knowledge of the events of the campaign. If it lacks the picturesque view of the historian skilled in the art of popular narrative, it is in the highest degree satisfactory to one searching for exact and complete information. I have followed this work in statements of fact in this paper, excepting where I have otherwise noted.

The criticisms to which I have referred credit Grant with taking the proper route and with the greatest skill in moving his columns, changing his bases, and protecting his trains, and I shall not dwell upon these features of the campaign. It is sufficient to direct attention to the fact that from the camps north of the Rapidan to the James the army was moved over a hundred miles, crossing three rivers in the face of the enemy, and making nine flank movements, without a miscarriage or surprise; that the pontoon bridges across the Rapidan were taken up on orders issued while the Battle of the Wilderness was yet in progress, that the base of supplies was changed first to Fredericksburg, next to Port Royal, next to White House, and last to the James River; that the sick and the wounded, excepting a few who perished between the hostile lines, were taken up and transported to the rear with the most perfect method and humanity; that the army was well fed, well clothed, and well sheltered; that the daily percentage of sick in May was less than, and in June was almost the same as, it was in camp in April,¹ and that a supply train of 4000 wagons and a long train of reserve artillery were so well protected in their movements that not a gun, wagon, or animal was taken by the enemy, and not a dollar's worth of material was abandoned or destroyed to save it from the enemy.

But the master mind that successfully planned and directed these immense operations is accused of underestimating the difficulty of the task before him, of uselessly sending Butler's army up the James and misdirecting its efforts, of neglecting other reinforcements which were at his command and crossing

¹ M. & S. pt. 1, p. 329.

the Rapidan with an insufficient force, of moving his army from one position to another with the single idea of finding new lines of intrenchments to attack, of making a series of hopeless assaults and attacking in season and out of season, instead of flanking the enemy by repeated movements until they should be caught in a place where they could be attacked with the certainty of victory, of inadequately supporting his attacking columns and recklessly wasting the lives of his soldiers, and of sometimes neglecting strategic opportunities. This is a formidable indictment. No general should be forgiven for this aggregation of errors. They seem utterly inconsistent with the military skill which previously had directed our armies in the West at Forts Donelson and Henry, Vicksburg and Chattanooga, and which, a little later, impelled the armies of the Potomac and James in the capture of Petersburg and the brilliant pursuit and capture of Lee's army; and the specific acts on which these errors are charged deserve a very careful examination.

Grant had once suggested that the Army of the Potomac might abandon all the routes to Richmond and move from Suffolk, Virginia, against the Weldon Railroad and Raleigh, threatening the Danville Railroad, and so compelling the enemy to quit Virginia and East Tennessee;¹ and Swinton says² that this plan was recommended by the soundest military reasoning, but intimates that external influences induced Grant to relinquish it for the plan which he adopted. Badeau says (vol. ii, p. 43) that the former plan was devised by General W. F. Smith, and that Grant did not incline to it after he came East; but be this as it may, it seems improbable that President Lincoln urged the route by way of the Rapidan, in view of the fact related by General Grant in his *Memoirs* (vol. ii, p. 123) that the President suggested that he might go down the Potomac and advance on Lee from some point on that river. No intimation that there was any pressure upon

¹ Badeau, vol. ii, p. 558.

² Swinton, p. 408.

him to take the Rapidan route is conveyed to us by Grant's Memoirs, and there is no reason to doubt that he selected it because of the opportunity and extent of country it afforded for fighting Lee near our base of supplies before he could inclose himself in the permanent works around Richmond.¹ In this place I will quote the opinion of General Humphreys in reply to the suggestion that Lee's army might have been broken up with much less loss of life by manœuvring it into positions where victory would have been assured rather than fighting it as Grant did. He says:² "But move as we might, long continued, hard fighting, under great difficulties, was before us, and, whatever might be the line of operations adopted, the successful execution of the task of the Army of the Potomac could only be accomplished by the vigorous and untiring efforts of all belonging to that army, and by suffering heavy losses in killed and wounded, and that the whole army well understood."

This is the opinion of one who, as chief of General Meade's staff, had the most intimate knowledge of what the army had to do, and who for military learning and skill and sagacity and caution, combined with courage and resolution, had not an equal among all the corps commanders.

Grant determined to send Butler's army up the James simultaneously with the advance of the Army of the Potomac across the Rapidan, in order to have the two armies converge, to unite in front of Richmond, while at the same time Butler's army in its movement should cover the James, it being important to guard that avenue to the sea. Butler, without uncovering the mouth of the James, could have threatened Richmond and Petersburg with 10,000 men, but he could not have safely taken that number of men far up the river in the face of the enemy, and he therefore was given a force of about 38,000 men.³ Grant is criticised for this; but when we find that the Army of the James detained over 27,000 men

¹ Grant's Memoirs, 141.

² Va. Camp. 9.

³ Ibid. 137.

from Lee, so that no part of it manifested itself in Grant's front until after the great battles of the Wilderness and Spottsylvania,¹ we see that the event justified Grant in sending this army up the James, for the number detained by Butler was proportionately greater than that opposed by Lee to Grant in those battles.

Regarding the assumption that Grant is responsible for Butler's landing at Bermuda Hundred instead of advancing on Petersburg, it is to be said that Grant in his written orders directed that he should occupy City Point, and that in person he urged upon Butler the importance of taking Petersburg.²

It is said that Grant should have taken with him across the Rapidan all the troops then in the defenses of Washington, whose numbers are stated at 40,000 to 50,000. Whether he is chargeable with an error in this respect cannot be determined until we learn whether the administration would have permitted these troops to quit Washington before Grant made it certain that he could hold Lee in his front and prevent him from marching on Washington, and whether, before the country was roused by the great battles of May, the administration could have ventured to violate the contract with men who had enlisted to serve as heavy artillery by sending them to serve as infantry against the enemy. I have not been able to find the authority for placing the number of men left in Washington at 40,000 to 50,000. Not over 20,000 of them all told seem to have reached Grant afterwards when he called for all that could be sent.³

¹ Va. Camp. 124, 141, 142, 164.

² 95 W. R. 15, 16.

³ Va. Camp. 110, note. The returns published in the War Records after this paper was read show that April 30, 1864, there were 39,394 "present for duty" in the Departments of Washington and the Susquehanna, from which organizations numbering 17,333 were sent to the Army of the Potomac before June 15, 1864. The remainder included over 9 regiments of the Veteran Reserve Corps, not available for field duty, besides detachments of recruits and convalescents (60 W. R. 1047, 1052; 81 W. R. 47, 48). As the 9th corps had

One other criticism of this nature which remains to be noticed is against the selection of the 9th corps to reinforce the Army of the Potomac instead of a corps from the Army of the James. The 9th corps was kept at Annapolis to lead the enemy to believe that it was intended to be landed on the coast south of Norfolk; and it was probably fear of this movement which detained the troops in North Carolina that Beauregard afterwards summoned in such haste to the defense of Petersburg. This was a sufficient reason for not exchanging the 9th corps with one of the Army of the James. The objection which is urged to the 9th corps is that two thirds of its strength was in raw soldiers, but they fought well, and in the two white divisions at least fourteen of the twenty-two regiments were old organizations.

Grant took across the Rapidan about 115,000 officers and men "equipped for duty," of all arms (127,095 "present for duty").¹ The morning reports of Lee's army a few days before showed the force to be 61,025 effectives.² These are the numbers of those in both armies who could be brought into line of battle.³ I do not think that at the time Grant crossed the Rapidan any military critic would have said that with an effective force nearly twice as great as Lee's he had made inadequate preparation in this respect. Mr. Ropes estimates Lee's force 70,000 and General Grant estimates it at 80,000.⁴ There were in it 66,351 "present for duty."⁵

Lee's advance, consisting of Ewell's and Hill's corps, lay in rear of the intrenchments along the Rapidan from Barnett's Ford to Morton's Ford, with a line of intrenchments facing

19,250 present for duty (60 W. R. 1055), it seems that the statement of the War Department giving the numbers of reinforcements May 4 to June 12, cited by General Humphreys, was inadequate.

¹ 67 W. R. 198, 285, 287, 915; 2 Grant's Memoirs, 291.

² N. & L. 111; Va. Camp. 14-17.

³ 2 Grant's Memoirs, 289, 291; 2 Badeau, 94; Va. Camp. 14, 408; 69 W. R. 198, 285, 287, 915.

⁴ 2 Grant's Memoirs, 290.

⁵ N. & L. 111.

east along Mine Run from Morton's Ford to Antioch Church. The Wilderness covered the country east of Mine Run. Lee's headquarters were at Orange Court House, and Longstreet with two divisions of his corps lay in reserve at Gordonsville. The Orange Turnpike, the Orange Plank Road, and the Catharpin Road all ran from Chancellorsville or its vicinity southwesterly through the Wilderness. Grant directed the Army of the Potomac to cross the Rapidan at Ely's and Germanna fords, and to push for the latter two roads with a view to passing the column on the Plank Road over to the Catharpin Road a little way beyond the Wilderness Tavern, and then, moving up along the Catharpin and Pamunkey roads, to strike the western flank of Lee's force on the Rapidan in the open country beyond the Wilderness; but he made every disposition for fighting the enemy whenever they should come out of their intrenchments to interrupt the movement. The whole army excepting the 9th corps crossed the Rapidan on the night of May 3, and the different corps reached the designated halting places — the 2d at Chancellorsville, the 5th at Wilderness Tavern, and the 6th on the heights west of Germanna Ford — on the 4th of May, in season to have continued their march five miles further; but they were halted to cover the passage of the immense wagon trains across the Rapidan and their concentration at Todd's Tavern, which operations were not entirely accomplished until 2 P. M. the next day. This halt has been characterized as a mistake, and question has been made whether the army ought not to have pushed on to Robertson's Tavern or Spottsylvania Court House, leaving the protection of the trains to Torbert's cavalry and two divisions of the 6th corps or the 9th corps. General Walker, in the "History of the Second Army Corps," says that 50,000 men could have been in position beyond the Wilderness at Robertson's Tavern before night, with only Ewell's 20,000 near enough to attack, and that 80,000 of our men could have been there by next morning, with the necessary cross-roads all

cut along their rear by labor during the night. On the contrary, General Humphreys says¹ that to have moved on would have left the right too open, and that on this account, and to rest the troops for the action of the morrow, the halt was judicious. Let us examine the situation. If the army had moved on five miles, there would have been five miles between its rear and Ely's Ford, where the trains were crossing. To a point within that five miles it was less than fifteen miles from the enemy's works at Morton's Ford to the road from Ely's Ford. Lee predicted our movement on the 2d, and, discovering it early on the 4th, sent Hill down the Plank Road and Ewell down the Turnpike, towards our columns. Ewell easily got within five miles of the Wilderness Tavern, and early on the morning of the 5th had his advance on the road leading from the Turnpike to Spotswood's on the Germanna Road, within five miles of Ely's Ford, where our trains were crossing. If Grant had left his right open, the exploit of Jackson at Chancellorsville a year before would have furnished Ewell an encouraging precedent for falling on our trains to bring Grant to the right-about. If the attack had been made, Torbert's cavalry and two divisions of infantry could not have even covered the ground, much less could they have withstood the attack of Ewell's corps. The 9th corps was out of the question. Having been detained to guard the railroad between Bull Run and the Rappahannock, it made a forced march for the Rapidan, but its leading division did not cross the Rapidan until the morning of the 5th, and the other two did not cross until evening.

Let us now inquire what would have happened to the army if it had marched five miles farther on the 4th. If it had moved towards Spottsylvania Court House, leaving its trains to follow from Ely's Ford via Todd's Tavern, the enemy would not have asked a better situation. Both Ewell and Hill (if they could have persuaded themselves that Grant

¹ Va. Camp. 20.

had thus deliberately exposed his trains) would have swooped down upon them, and speedily have ended the Wilderness campaign by destruction of Grant's bread and ammunition.

If the 5th corps had moved out on the Turnpike to take position at Robertson's Tavern, it would have met Ewell's corps halfway from Wilderness Tavern, the 2d corps would have had to come up from Chancellorsville by the Orange Plank Road, adding ten miles to its previous march of twenty, to join hands with the 5th; Hill's corps, which marched only fifteen miles that day, would probably have come up, and our troops would still have found themselves in the Wilderness and probably too much occupied with the enemy to busy themselves in cutting roads along the rear of their line for operations the next day. But if Grant had succeeded in taking up the supposed line at Robertson's Tavern, the enemy would probably have retired into their works along Mine Run, as they had done in the previous December when our forces reached Robertson's Tavern, to await the arrival of Longstreet, and to await another flank movement on Grant's part, only to meet it as they met those which he afterwards in fact did make.

But the halt of the 4th diminished the hope, founded on the experience of the Mine Run campaign, that the Army of the Potomac would succeed in passing through the Wilderness and turning Lee's flank. The order which issued that evening for the movement on the 5th warned the corps commanders that their troops should "be held ready to meet the enemy at any moment;" and Grant, on hearing of Lee's approach on the morning of the 5th, ordered Meade to attack the enemy wherever they were found¹ "without giving time for dispositions."

The head of the 5th corps, which had lain across the Orange Turnpike in front of Wilderness Tavern during the night of the 4th, was moving across country toward Parker's

¹ Badean, ii, 104.

Store on the Plank Road to join hands with the 2d corps, which was to move up the Catharpin Road and throw its right out towards this point, when Ewell's advance was discovered in front, coming eastward on the Pike, and Meade between seven and eight o'clock ¹ ordered Warren to attack this force at once. It is said that it was a mistake to order an attack before the 6th corps came up on the right of the 5th, but the Union generals had too often delayed their attacks for everybody to come into line. The chance of inflicting damaging blows before the enemy had concentrated and prepared for the attack had too often been thrown away in this manner, and this was not the time to repeat these tactics. Longstreet was not yet within supporting distance, and even Hill's corps was separated from Ewell's by several miles of thickets and forest. Ewell's corps itself was not yet in line of battle; it was seen by our advance ² filing out of the road to form line of battle, and it was not all in line of battle when our attack, too long delayed, actually began. The 5th corps numbered 24,000 infantry in line of battle,³ and Ewell's corps, without Hoke's brigade and 21st North Carolina, numbered in all only about 17,000, and, with Ramseur's and Johnston's brigades absent, probably not over 16,000; ⁴ and although in the dense thickets of the Wilderness, if the party attacked was prepared, the attacking party was at a disadvantage, especially if composed of troops unfamiliar with the country, yet military principles will not support the theory that with the advantages which were in our favor it was a mistake to attack without waiting for the 6th corps. If the attack had been delayed until the 6th corps arrived, the enemy would have been found in perfect preparation and probably behind breastworks, for Ewell's instructions were not to bring on an engagement before Longstreet's arrival. It seems to me that the attack failed of

¹ Va. Camp, 23.

² *Ante*, p. 129.

³ 67 W. R. 198.

⁴ 67 W. R. 1069-1070.

complete success, not because of the absence of the 6th corps, but because the orders to attack were not promptly obeyed, and because of the want of common tactical precautions in some one of the generals of the 5th corps. We are told by Mr. Ropes "that it was no secret that the best officers of the 5th corps urged that the attack should be deferred until the 6th corps had got upon the right," and in this connection I quote from the above-cited paper of Colonel Swan, who was a member of the staff of General Ayres, then commanding a brigade in Griffin's division of the 5th corps. Stating that at five o'clock in the morning the pickets of Griffin's division, which had been somewhat irregularly posted the night before at the open field on the Turnpike where our earthworks were afterwards thrown up about a mile and a half west of the Wilderness Tavern, having been ordered in for the march towards Parker's Store, the enemy was discovered approaching on the Pike; he proceeds as follows:¹ "I remember myself that the break in Griffin's picket line was immediately rectified, that the division was formed in line of battle and began to throw up a breastwork of logs and earth, and that Generals Griffin, Ayres, and Bartlett rode out to near the picket line, whence the enemy could be seen leaving the road and entering the woods to the right and left. I knew that the generals and staff officers all thought that the enemy were in strong force. I remember that word to that effect was sent back to General Warren, and I am sure that not long after, I knew that Griffin had been ordered to attack. I think I carried the order from Griffin to Ayres to attack. I remember that Ayres sent me back to Griffin to say that in his judgment we ought to wait, for the enemy was about to attack us, and we had a strong position, and I remember that Griffin went again to the front and then sent me back to say to General Warren that he was averse to making an attack. I don't remember his words, but it was a remonstrance.

¹ *Ante*, p. 129.

I think I went twice to General Warren with that message. The last time I met him on the road, and I remember that he answered me as if fear was at the bottom of my errand. I remember my indignation. It was afterwards a common report in the army that Warren had just had unpleasant things said to him by General Meade, and that General Meade had just heard the bravery of his army questioned. However, the attack was not made by Griffin until Warren came up, although in the mean time his troops had advanced to near the edge of the open fields shown on the map as half a mile or so in front of the Union breastworks." The attack was made by Griffin's division on the Turnpike at about noon.¹

In reading these things one cannot wonder that Grant, waiting for over four hours at the Wilderness Tavern to hear Warren's musketry announce that his orders had been obeyed, should question the spirit of those who were responsible for the delay, every moment of which was impairing the chance for victory which he saw within his grasp. These generals who hesitated to attack were brave and skillful soldiers, but some strange lethargy seems to have possessed them. When the attack was made the enemy were driven in fine style; but although there were troops enough not only to form two and three lines of battle, but also a reserve line,² no precaution was taken to extend our line far enough to the right to insure against a flanking movement, or even to throw back a column to cover the flank, although a single brigade would have sufficed. The enemy threw forward a force which turned Griffin's right flank in a counter-attack, the right of our line gave way, and the whole of Griffin's division retired to its original position. Portions of the other three divisions of the 5th corps made disjointed attacks on Ewell's corps on the south of the Pike, which miscarried because the direction was lost in the thickets, and an attack was made on a division of

¹ Va. Camp. 26.

² *Ante*, pp. 130, 131.

the 6th corps after it arrived on the right of the 5th, which was repulsed, and thus ended the battle of this day on the Turnpike.

Another battle was fought on the Orange Plank Road. The advance of Hill eastward on that road being detected early in the morning, Getty's division of the 6th corps was sent down from Wilderness Tavern, and, forming line of battle across the Plank Road in front of the Brock Road, awaited the arrival of the 2d corps under Hancock, which, marching back from a point on the Catharpin Road, two miles west of Todd's Tavern, came up the Brock Road and formed on the left of Getty. Getty's division, advancing westward on both sides of the Orange Plank Road, met the enemy between four and five o'clock in the afternoon near Tapp's farm. The 2d corps came to its aid, and the combined forces engaged the enemy in a close and furious battle which lasted until dark. General Humphreys says¹ that with an hour more of daylight Hill would have been driven from the field, for his force was shattered and disjointed. He had not connected with Ewell, and during the battle on the Plank Road Wadsworth was sent with his division and Baxter's brigade from the line of the 5th corps, in a southwesterly direction, to take Hill's force in flank and rear; but nightfall also stopped him short of his mark, or he would have rolled up Hill's flank, and the result would have been disaster for the latter. This attack on the Plank Road seems to have been amply justified by the damage inflicted on Hill's corps, and more than justified by the chance of completely routing this corps, which nothing but the merest chance averted. Probably the obstruction of the march of the 2d corps by the artillery in the Brock Road delayed its arrival long enough to save Hill's corps.

It has been asserted that Getty was ordered in against Hill before Hancock could get up, but General Humphreys says¹ that at 2 P. M. the head of Hancock's column arrived and

¹ Va. Camp. 35.

was placed on Getty's left, and that at 3.15 the latter was ordered to attack, and Hancock was ordered to support him with his whole corps, and that Getty's attack, supported by Hancock, was made at 4.15.¹

General Walker says² that the reports of Lee's movements on the 4th caused some change of plan, and that "it is difficult to understand why Hancock should have been sent so far away to the left, unless his movement was to be persisted in, except only in some extraordinary emergency, unless, that is, the commanding general felt strong enough to fight, or at least to hold in check, the enemy with the 5th and 6th corps while pushing the 2d into their rear," yet that Hancock was called back before the battle with the 5th and 6th corps had been fought out. No suggestion appears in Grant's order of the 4th of an intention to push the 2d corps alone into the rear of the enemy, and it is not clear how this could have been done with any hope of success, and General Humphreys, who planned the movement, makes no allusion to such intention in his explanation of it. General Humphreys says³ that the order for the movement on the 5th conformed to Grant's original plan, which was to move by the Catharpin and Pamunkey roads to turn Lee's right (western) flank in the open country, and to this end Hancock was ordered to march westward on the Catharpin Road to Shady Grove Church and extend the right towards Warren. Warren was to move across country to Parker's Store and extend his right towards Sedgwick at Old Wilderness Tavern, to which point the latter was ordered to move. The only modification which the reports of the enemy's movements on the 4th caused was that these three corps were to wait when they reached the points desig-

¹ Va. Camp. 30, 31. It appears by the reports of Generals Hancock and Getty that the latter was ordered to attack after the 2d corps had begun forming on the left of his division, but before it was completely in position to attack. 67 W. R. 319, 320, 677.

² History of the Second Army Corps, 411.

³ Va. Camp. 12, 13, 21.

nated, prepared to move on, and the reserve artillery was closed up somewhat.¹

On the 4th a movement of the enemy in force on the Plank Road west of Verdierville had been seen and a few shots were fired by them at Robertson's Tavern on the Pike, but this was all. Sedgwick's corps at Wilderness Tavern was in the best position to support Warren against an attack on either of these roads by Ewell's or Hill's corps, and Sedgwick and Warren together were quite equal to withstanding or attacking these two corps of the enemy. If, on the other hand, the enemy had been moving out to oppose our turning movement on the Catharpin and Pamunkey roads, it would have been very desirable to encourage them in thus moving out of their works into the open country with a view to engaging them there, and with this view it was altogether best for Hancock to continue his march on the Catharpin Road. He could come to the aid of the 5th and 6th corps, or they could come to his aid by the Brock Road, as long as we held ground to the west of it. This road was the key to the position.

Longstreet had not appeared on the night of the 5th. Prompt work must be had if his absence was to avail our forces. Burnside had arrived on the field with three divisions, and he was ordered to march at 2 A. M. May 6, so as to arrive at five, in the interval between Warren and Hancock, between the Pike and the Plank Road, and then to pass between Ewell and Hill and attack the left and rear of the latter from Chewning's, while the rest of the line attacked. Sedgwick and Warren on the Pike found the enemy in breastworks, and, although they advanced against them repeatedly, were beaten

¹ Badeau, ii, 102, note; 67 W. R. 371, 375. Meade's order of 6 P. M., May 4, seems to clearly indicate the purpose to have the 2d corps take position to act with the 5th and 6th corps. The reason that it got so far away from the former was that its march was unimpeded, while the 5th corps encountered the enemy early in the morning. The 2d corps got back to Todd's Tavern within supporting distance, and there waited two hours for General Meade's order to move to the attack. 67 W. R. 189, 318.

back each time. On the Plank Road Wadsworth's division of the 5th corps and Hancock with Birney's, Mott's, and Getty's divisions attacked Hill's force and drove them out of their intrenchments and through the forest, inflicting great loss.¹ Longstreet, with two divisions and Anderson's division of Hill's corps, arriving at this time, made a counter-attack which partially checked Hancock's advance, and the irregularity of his line of battle and the confusion into which the command had fallen in the thickets and forest required Hancock to halt and rectify the disorder. He sent the news of his success to Gibbon, who commanded his left wing in front of the Brock Road, and ordered him to attack the enemy's right flank. Gibbon, who for a short time was alarmed by the approach of some returning Union convalescents on the Brock Road, and who perhaps was in fear of an attack by Longstreet on the road leading from the Catharpin to the Brock Road at Trigg's, which he was guarding, did not attack.² Gibbon contended that he never received what he supposed was a positive order to attack,³ but no explanation of his failure to attack appears in his report of the battle.⁴ Hancock felt that if this attack had been made, the force in his front would have been beaten.

At about nine o'clock Hancock attacked again with five divisions, but was prevented from exerting himself to the utmost by an attack of the enemy's dismounted cavalry and artillery on Gibbon, who remained guarding the roads on the left, which, with the rapid firing of Sheridan's cavalry, who, in the attempt to come up the Brock Road to attack Longstreet's right, had encountered Stuart's cavalry, made Hancock fear that Barlow was seriously attacked by a part of Longstreet's corps. No ground was gained, and at about eleven the contest died away. A flank attack by Longstreet from the Fredericksburg Railroad then broke several of Hancock's brigades on the left of the Plank Road and spread such disorder in the

¹ Va. Camp. 37; History of the Second Army Corps, 420.

² 67 W. R. 321.

³ History of the Second Army Corps, 426.

⁴ 67 W. R. 430.

lines that, it being impossible to correct them in the thickets, Hancock ordered them back into his works along the Brock Road, where he re-formed, and then swept his front clear with a brigade. The responsibility for this reverse seems to lie on General Birney or some one of his subordinates, for it seems that they should have guarded against a flank attack.

Burnside with two divisions made his attack between Warren's and Hancock's commands at two o'clock, and first drove, and then was driven by, the enemy, and finally established himself on the line with these commands so as to connect them. At 4.15 P. M. the enemy made a great attack on Hancock and were completely repulsed. At a later hour Ewell turned the right flank of the right division of Sedgwick's corps north of the Turnpike and, surprising two brigades, threw them into confusion and captured some hundreds of prisoners; but the damage extended no farther, and indeed Early says in his memoirs that, such was the disorder into which the attacking force had fallen, it was fortunate for them that darkness put an end to the conflict.¹ General Humphreys says² that Wright, who commanded the division which was flanked, had seen that the situation afforded him the opportunity to flank the enemy, but did not attempt it for want of troops, and he adds that two brigades of the 6th corps which were in reserve would have been furnished if requested. This would have turned the tables. This was not the only error on the right flank. General Humphreys also says² that the pickets must have neglected their duty to allow the command to be surprised; and it was a singular mishap to suffer within three miles of the very spot where, on this same turnpike, through the same neglect, Jackson had been permitted to fall on the flank of the 11th corps almost exactly a year before.

It seems to me that neither Grant nor Meade was responsible for the four great tactical errors which I have pointed out, viz.: the failure of the 5th corps to attack promptly on

¹ Va. Camp. 50, note.

² Ibid. 50.

the morning of the 5th ; the failure of Gibbon to attack Longstreet in flank on the 6th ; the flanking of Birney on the left ; and the flanking of Sedgwick on the right. If either of the attacks had been promptly made, our victory would have been much greater. If the enemy's flank attacks had been properly met, our losses would have been less, and if Birney had repulsed that made on him, Hancock might have given the finishing stroke to the force opposed to him. One cannot withhold his admiration from the commander who, like Grant, realizing that his plans have miscarried through errors like these, for which he is not responsible, wastes no time in complaints, and makes no attempt to throw responsibility for any degree of failure on any one else, but resolutely and silently plans to strike again.

It has been said that, when Longstreet's presence was discovered on the morning of the 6th, Hancock sent to the Brock Road for the balance of his command, but that Barlow's division under Gibbon was kept there because of the disquieting reports that Longstreet was coming up that road, and that, deprived of this reliance, Hancock sent for Burnside, but that the latter had not been able to get through the woods : this conveys a wrong impression. Hancock sent word to Meade at 6.30 that Burnside should *attack*, as Birney (on the left) was just holding his own against Longstreet.¹ At 7 A. M. he directed Gibbon to attack Longstreet's right flank, and Gibbon, as before stated, failed to attack, because he did not understand that he was ordered to do so, and not from any fear of Hancock's that Longstreet would attack Gibbon where he was. The attack prescribed for Gibbon was an offensive rather than a defensive project. At the same hour Meade sent word to Hancock that Stevenson's division of the 9th corps was at Wilderness Tavern and would be sent to him if required,¹ and at eight o'clock this division reported to him and it took part in his second attack at 8.50 A. M.²

At this same hour Hancock was informed that Burnside

¹ 68 W. R. 440.

² Va. Camp. 39-41.

had pushed nearly to Parker's Store and would attack in that quarter.¹ There seems to have been every reason for Grant to believe this to be true. General Humphreys says that Burnside moved out in the morning towards Chewning's, and, finding the enemy in force near that place, made dispositions for the attack (p. 46); and I find it stated in the history of the 6th New Hampshire Volunteers,² a regiment of Griffin's brigade of Potter's division, that moving at 2 A. M. from bivouac in the rear of the 6th corps in the direction of Parker's Store, the brigade formed for attack at daylight, and advancing about a mile met the enemy in force, and that a desultory fire was kept up until about eleven o'clock, when the brigade moved to the left. Why the attack by the whole line under Burnside was not made at an early hour is a question that deserves investigation.³ General Humphreys says (p. 40) "reiterated orders did not bring about his expected coöperation. As late as 11.45 General Rawlins wrote him: 'Push in and drive the enemy from Hancock's front and get on the Orange Plank Road. Hancock has expected you for the last three hours, and has been making his attack and dispositions with a view to your assistance.'"

Upon the whole it does not seem to me that the verdict of history will be that Grant failed to win a more decisive success in the Wilderness by reason of faulty tactics on his part, or that he was not justified in expecting a great victory from his superiority in numbers when he had induced the enemy to come out of their works to fight.

Grant is criticised for ordering the 5th and 6th corps to attack when Hancock did, May 6; and it is said that they were repulsed, "as might have been expected;" and it is said that these corps ought to have been ordered to intrench at

¹ 68 W. R. 441.

² Adjutant-General Rep. N. H. 1866, v. ii, p. 595.

³ See 67 W. R. 460, 461; 68 W. R. 906, 907, published after this paper was read.

daylight, in order to send all the men that could be spared to Hancock's assistance. This attack was essential to insure against reinforcing Hill's corps by Ewell's ; and as the enemy had only hasty breastworks such as Hancock's men captured on the left, and the lines attacking them were concealed by the thickets almost to their very front, it is difficult to understand why it was to be expected that more than 20,000 men under Warren and Sedgwick were to be repulsed by less than 15,000 under Ewell. These commanders were finally ordered to suspend their attacks and throw up works, in order that part of them might be available to reinforce Hancock. This was at half-past ten,¹ and not, as has been stated, after Hancock had been forced back and lost all his ground, for Longstreet's attack on Hancock did not begin until about eleven o'clock.² It would not have been wise to send any part of Warren's and Sedgwick's force to Hancock before it became certain that the force under Burnside had the opportunity to make itself felt.

On the 7th, finding that the enemy were well intrenched and that they would not come out of their intrenchments, Grant started the army that evening on another flanking movement to the left. When we reflect that this was the first time that our army had ever, after a pitched battle in the enemy's country, resumed its march towards Richmond, we realize that Grant had won a substantial success in the Wilderness, besides inflicting a heavy loss on the enemy. At this time, when the enemy confessed their inability to further come outside of their intrenchments to resist our march into their territory, it seems to me, rather than at Gettysburg, came the turning-point of the war in the East. After Gettysburg the Confederacy had the same capacity for recruiting armies and supplying them as before,³ and the morale of the Army of Northern Virginia was just as good. In the autumn of 1863 Lee crossed the Rapidan to attack Meade, and in

¹ 68 W. R. 451.

² Va. Camp. 42, 43.

³ Pollard, cited in 2 Badeau, 8.

December he came out of his intrenchments along Mine Run to attack, and failed to come to blows only because Meade had retreated across the Rapidan in the night. But the Wilderness marked a perceptible turn of the tide. The Army of Northern Virginia, as a whole, never again exposed itself out of its trenches until it was driven out April 2, 1865; and from the time when the Confederate leader recognized the fact that Grant's army could not be driven back across the Rapidan the conclusion must have been forced upon him, if he permitted himself to reason upon the subject, that the fall of Richmond must be the inevitable result, if the commander of the Union armies had the power to forecast with military logic, the nerve to keep his forces up to their work, the skill to conduct an offensive campaign, and the good fortune to retain the confidence of the North. The only hope left to Lee was that delay might exhaust the patience of our people, or strengthen the internal enemies of the Union, so much as to compel peace with the Confederacy or possibly lead to foreign intervention. But his clear-eyed and immovable antagonist penetrated the future with an unerring vision, and his iron hand was never to relax its grasp until the last soldier in arms against the Union had surrendered.

The loss on our side in the Wilderness was 17,666,¹ or 15.5 per cent. of the effective force of the army, and about 17.3 per cent. of those actually engaged. The Medical and Surgical History of the War places the enemy's loss at 11,400, which is 17.1 per cent. of the enemy's total and 18.1 of their effective force.² The sources of these figures are not given, but from the reports of a number of the Confederate commanders³ which have been preserved (some of which impress one with the belief that they greatly understate their losses), I draw

¹ 67 W. R. 133.

² See N. & L. 111.

³ Va. Camp. 54; 67 W. R. 1062, 1064, 1069, 1070, 1072, 1073, 1091.

$$\begin{array}{r} 17666 \\ 11400 \\ \hline \Sigma \quad 29,066 \end{array}$$

the conclusion that their loss was at least as great as this.¹ In a conflict which could be terminated only by the destruction of one army or the other, to inflict a loss of 17.1 per cent. with a loss of 17.3 per cent. in one battle was a substantial success in itself, considering the disproportion in the numbers of the two armies and the numbers behind them from which recruits could be drawn.

Our advance arrived in the vicinity of Spottsylvania Court House on the morning of May 8, but Lee discovered or surmised this movement against his right flank early enough to send a portion of his army to that place in advance of us. An attack was at once made on these troops by Meade's leading divisions without dislodging them, and as a result Lee drew his lines around Spottsylvania Court House on the west, north and east, from the Po River at Shady Grove Church Road, around McCool's house and east of Spottsylvania Court House, to a point south of the Fredericksburg Road. Only two courses were open to Grant. One was to attack Lee where he was, the other was to again attempt to flank him. He is blamed for not adopting the latter course. It is said that he should have "flanked the enemy out of position after position, until by some fortunate combination of circumstances he could be brought to bay in a place where our great superiority of numbers could tell." If this means that Grant should have waited until Lee's army could be caught out of their breast-works, a conclusive answer is that they never would allow themselves to be so caught. Grant did move to flank them repeatedly, and although the movements almost always followed very quickly after blows which inflicted severe injuries on the enemy, yet they were always able to detect them and to plant themselves in new works across Grant's path. They would have done this no less if he had retired from each new set of

¹ A very conservative estimate gives 7750 killed and wounded. (N. & L., p. 111, note 3.) 7078 prisoners were lost May 1 to 12. (67 W. R. 280.) It is not possible to ascertain how many were lost in the Wilderness.

works without fighting and attempted to out-march them in a mere game of manœuvres. That these were to be the enemy's tactics could be foreseen when Grant found them intrenched at Spottsylvania, and as he was of the opinion that nothing but hard fighting could conquer Lee's army, he determined that it was better to attack that army in works hastily constructed, in such short intervals between fighting and marching as he should be obliged to let them have, than to manœuvre them into the formidable fortifications of Richmond and then ultimately attack them there with their strength unimpaired.

It must not be forgotten that these field-works were not usually serious obstacles ; our men passed over them without effort when they reached them ; they served simply as a shelter from bullets and shot ; and whenever they could be approached without too long exposure to fire, it was just as easy to charge upon them as it was to charge upon an unprotected line of battle standing up and delivering its fire. It is true that the charging line could not maintain as good order in crossing earthworks as it could in an unobstructed field ; yet if order could be restored soon enough to sweep down in the rear of the works, or if the enemy on either flank should lose heart and retreat, then the supports could come forward and pass over the works in good order and form line of battle inside. There came a time afterwards at Petersburg when all this was done. Grant saw that the war could not be ended except with a great deal of fighting of this kind. It is quite probable that he hoped for an earlier success than he achieved, and that at first he did not realize what a wary and skillful leader, and what a brave, steadfast, and resolute army he had to encounter, for his experience in the West had not been with their equals ; but he saw that if he did not succeed at first, the way to make success possible at last was by hammering the enemy, and that good fortune might attend our attacks at any time, but that, whether the end was to come sooner or later, constant action to the very limit of our ability was necessary to termi-

nate the war before exhausted patience, political opposition, or foreign intervention should make our difficulties too great.

If, when he saw the enemy intrenched in his front at Spottsylvania Court House, Grant, adopting the course which his critics now point out as the proper one, had manœuvred again and again by the left flank until he had arrived in front of Petersburg (if indeed Lee had permitted such feeble strategy to proceed without interruption), can it be contended that Grant there could have extended his lines to the right and left, embracing his adversary in the deadly lock which was broken only at Appomattox Court House, or that he could have turned the flank and broken through the lines at Petersburg and then wheeled to sweep down in rear of them as if in some magnificent field-day manœuvre, as he did on the 2d of April? To my mind there is but one answer, and that is that all this would have been impossible. The losses in men and material which Grant inflicted on Lee between the Rapidan and the James were necessary to make these things possible, and in the final result is found the best answer to the indiscriminating charges made against General Grant of ordering assaults without the pretense that they were to be followed by any considerable advantage, and wasting his soldiers in callous indifference to life and obstinate ignorance of the laws of strategy.

On the 9th of May the withdrawal of Early's corps from the enemy's left on the Catharpin Road and the appearance of a portion of Longstreet's corps on the Fredericksburg Road on our left, in front of the 9th corps as it came down that road towards Spottsylvania Court House and crossed the Ny (movements executed by Lee in drawing his lines about Spottsylvania Court House) led Grant to suspect Lee of moving on the Fredericksburg Road to try to cut off our communication with that place, which had been established as the new base of supplies, or to bar our further advance in that direction towards Richmond, and the 2d corps was sent across the

Po above the Shady Grove Church Road bridge for a reconnoissance, with a view to recrossing at or below that bridge, and to turning and attacking the enemy's left flank. The crossing was made by three divisions on the 9th, and on the morning of the 10th a portion of one division recrossed to the enemy's side on the left bank, half a mile below the bridge. The discovery of the enemy in strong force in that vicinity dispelled the suspicion of a movement on their part towards Fredericksburg, and Hancock was ordered to withdraw and recross to the left bank of the Po above the bridge, to join in an attack to be made by Warren and Wright on the enemy's works on the west side of the Spottsylvania lines. The enemy's attack on the 2d corps south of the Po in executing this order was repulsed with severe loss to the Confederates. Lee had sent Mahone's and Heth's divisions from Early's 3d corps, from the right to reinforce the left flank (the west front), when it was threatened by Hancock's movement,¹ and Warren and Wright were then ordered to assault on the west front. The former assaulted with two of his own divisions and two of Gibbon's brigades of the 2d corps, while Hancock's force was still engaged across the Po; but although the lines reached the enemy's works and some of our men entered them, the thickets disordered our lines too much to allow them to make a lodgment, and the attack was repulsed.² Further on the left Upton's division of the 6th corps, advancing from Shelton's, carried the west side of the Salient; but Mott's division, which was to have attacked on his left from Brown's, did not come forward, although one brigade made the attempt and was repulsed by an enfilading artillery fire, and Upton, being left without support in a dangerous position, was withdrawn after dark. Hancock assaulted from Warren's front at 7 P. M. with Birney's and Gibbon's divisions and a part of the 5th corps, without success. These attacks on the west front have been characterized as the beginning of a series of hopeless assaults,

¹ Va. Camp. 79 *et seq.*

² Va. Camp. 81, 82.

which those who ordered them could not expect to succeed, without supports waiting to pour in if the works should be carried, with no pretense that any considerable advantage was to follow their capture, and causing a wanton expenditure of men's lives in minor operations, merely with the hope of capturing a few miles of works, a few guns, and a few hundreds of prisoners. An examination of the authorities will not sustain this indictment.

The first assault under Warren, although already determined upon, was made only after Warren, a careful officer, had made a reconnoissance in force, and had reported that he thought the opportunity for an attack was favorable,¹ and Badeau says² that the second assault was made to divert the enemy's attacks from Upton, upon the report to Grant that the men were unwilling to obey the order to give up the works they had taken, which he had given to save further losses. Warren had Birney's division and a brigade of Gibbon's division of the 2d corps, and one of his own divisions in reserve, and Hancock had a part of the 5th corps and possibly Barlow's division to call on. These attacks of Warren and Hancock failed because the lines in advance did not carry the works, and not for want of supports. Neither did Upton's assault fail of greater success because ample supports were not provided. The other two divisions of the 6th corps lay on his right, and Mott was directed to enter the enemy's works on his left. Upton reported that he made an opening for Mott on his left, and General Humphreys says:³ "The failure of Mott's division did more than neutralize the success of Upton. Had Mott joined him, the two pressing forward, taking the enemy on the right and left in flank and rear and receiving further reinforcements from the 6th corps as they progressed, the probabilities were that we should have gained possession of Lee's intrenchments."

As to the sacrifice of life, — our total loss on this day was

¹ 68 W. R. 600, 604.

² Vol. ii, p. 164.

³ Va. Camp. 83, 87.

a little more than 4000. Of this number Upton lost about 1000, but he took over a thousand prisoners, besides inflicting a considerable loss in killed and wounded.¹ Of the remaining 3000 the 5th corps lost a little over 900, and, considering the probable loss of the 2d corps across the Po, it is not probable that its loss in the assault was greater. This gives about 2800 as the loss incident to the two assaults on the right, which was not such a loss out of the 30,000 men engaged in them as would have accompanied assaults of the fearful character attributed to them as above stated.

General Humphreys says² that it would have been better to continue Hancock's turning movement across the Po, aiding it with one division of the 5th corps, and attacking at the critical moment in Warren's front with the other two.³ Great respect is due to his opinion, but it is doubtful whether at the time he would have advised separating four divisions from the rest of the army by a river, in order to attack the enemy on two sides, when it would have required two passages to unite our force in case of a reverse, with the enemy interjected between the two parts of our army.

The Salient was too vulnerable a point to be left without another attempt upon it. The event fully justified the attempt. On the morning of May 12 it was taken, with many prisoners, by the 2d corps, but the attack failed of complete success because the supports were too impetuous. They pressed forward and entered the works with the front line, with the result that the men arrived in such a confused and unwieldy mass that a sufficient force could not be sent in proper order down the rear of the works to take the enemy's troops on the interior faces of the Salient in flank; and the enemy's reserves, coming forward from a line of works across the base of the Salient, drove our men back until our main line held only the outer face of the enemy's works. The 6th corps

¹ Va. Camp. 85, 89; 67 W. R. 229, 230.

² Va. Camp. 82, 83.

³ General Warren apparently held the same view, 67 W. R. 541.

came to the aid of the 2d, and the battle raged at the Salient all day, the enemy pouring in brigade after brigade to fight our men across the captured works. The enemy made a costly error in coming out of their works at the base of the Salient. General Humphreys says: "It has been said that the continuance of this desperate contest at the apex of the Salient on the part of General Lee was an unnecessary sacrifice of troops he could ill afford to spare; but in fact he could not withdraw them during daylight without the risk of serious disaster, and Meade continued to press against him there with the hope of bringing about that withdrawal and disaster." During the day the 5th and 9th corps attacked on the right and left, but found the enemy too strong for them. General Humphreys¹ places our loss this day at 6820, and the enemy's at from 9000 to 10,000. He places our total loss from the 8th to the 12th of May at 14,322, which was about 12.5 per cent. of our original effective force. He does not give an estimate of the Confederate loss on the 8th or 9th, and in the absence of reports covering the 10th says² that it may have been 2000. This seems a low estimate, but if we accept it and assume that against the Union loss of about 3500 on the 8th, 9th, and 11th, there was a Confederate loss of 1000, we arrive at a total Confederate loss from the 8th to the 12th of at least 12,000, or 19.7 per cent. of their original effective force. This result would disprove the charge of a useless sacrifice of life by General Grant down to the 12th of May.

On the morning of the 13th the enemy were found to have withdrawn from the Salient to a line near its base, and Grant ordered the fourth flank movement for that night. The 5th and 6th corps were sent to the left around the rear of the 9th corps to form on its left and attack on the Fredericksburg and Massaponax Church roads, but although the withdrawal

¹ Va. Camp. 104, 106; 67 W. R. 231. 7078 prisoners were taken May 1 to 12, 67 W. R. 280.

² Va. Camp. 89.

of these troops was not discovered by Lee until the 14th, and they would have turned the enemy's right if their march had been unimpeded, a storm set in, and rain, mud, and darkness delayed and fatigued them so much that the attack was given up. The 2d corps, leaving one division to cover the right of Burnside, who now held the right of our position, his left resting on the Fredericksburg Road, had moved to the road near the Ny.

On the night of the 17th, at the suggestion of Generals Humphreys and Wright,¹ the 2d and 6th corps were sent back to the Salient to attack the enemy's left, in the expectation that they would be found to have weakened their force there to meet our movements on the 13th against their right, and these corps with the 9th made the attack, but it was unsuccessful, as the enemy were found in strong force. Our loss was about 670.² Considering the advice under which this attack was made and the small loss, it cannot be considered as having been wanton, ill advised, or wasteful of life. This, the fifth flank movement of the campaign, ended Grant's offensive operations around Spottsylvania Court House.

On the 19th Ewell moved against our right with 6000 men to ascertain if Grant was again moving to his left, and perhaps with the hope of gaining some advantage,³ and, attacking, was driven back with a loss acknowledged by Ewell to be 900 men.⁴ Early's corps was held ready to coöperate, and a brigade of it made a demonstration on the 5th corps, with what loss we are not told. Our total loss on this day was about 1323.⁴

On the night of May 20, for the sixth flank movement, the 2d corps was sent to the left via Guinea Station and Bowling Green to Milford Station on the Fredericksburg Railroad, opposite Lee's right flank, in the hope that Lee, seeing this force isolated, would come out of his intrenchments to attack it; but although Lee was informed of it and inter-

¹ Va. Camp. 110.

² Va. Camp. 115.

³ Badeau, vol. ii, p. 208, note.

⁴ Va. Camp. 112, 115.

preted it as a movement to open communication with Port Royal as a base of supplies, he made no attempt to attack; and when the remainder of our army followed, he pushed twenty-eight miles further south for Hanover Junction to throw himself across the road which he thought Grant intended to take from the Pamunkey River to Richmond, and there to guard the Virginia Central Railroad, and then, learning that Grant was moving towards the North Anna River against the Confederate left, he directed his force to meet this movement. On the morning of the 23d the 5th corps, having crossed the North Anna at Jericho Mills, repulsed an attack made by Hill's corps from a position in front on the Virginia Central Railroad. The 5th corps carried the bridge head works at the telegraph road crossing on the same day, and on the next crossed to the south side. The enemy had a well-intrenched line from Little River to Ox Ford and thence along the North Anna, so as widely to separate the two parts of our army. Nothing but the severe handling which Lee had received could have prevented him from attacking one or the other portion here.¹ That he did not is the best evidence that his own estimate of the comparative prowess of the two armies had greatly changed since the time when he attacked in the Wilderness.¹

Sheridan, who on the 8th of May had been sent from Spottsylvania, with all the cavalry but Torbert's division, with instructions to make his way to the James and get supplies from Butler, and who had drawn the main part of the enemy's cavalry away, had gone within five miles of Richmond, recaptured 375 of our men, destroyed much material, and reached Butler's army, returned to Grant on the 24th. The latter has been criticised for sending his cavalry away rather than using them on foot, if necessary, in the woods, where they could not be used on horseback, and it is intimated that the raids which were made by the cavalry served only to

¹ Unless his inaction here resulted from his illness, as has been suggested.

cause the enemy some inconvenience. There are good reasons for differing from these views. The enemy's cavalry were also capable on foot, and to draw them away where they could be fought by our troopers in the saddle was a good service. In narrow forest roads the led horses of the dismounted men might have been a great obstacle to the movements of the infantry; our trains could not carry forage for so great a body of horse for a long time, and it was wise to let the most of the cavalry find forage for themselves while the army was making its first change of base. A sufficient number for the needs of the army were retained with it.

Due importance has not been credited to the destruction of property by the cavalry on their raids. The South was able to supply food enough to sustain all the soldiers it could recruit, but there was no great surplus to replace the immense quantities destroyed by our cavalry, and every locomotive, every car, and every rail destroyed was a loss which it was always difficult and at last impossible to replace. We shall see wagon trains at Petersburg eight months later in 1865 hauling rations along by railroad tracks dilapidated beyond repair, and Lee's army in the critical hour crippled by want of transportation and weakened by hunger in part, if not wholly, as the result of these cavalry raids. A list of the stores, materials, and railway equipment destroyed by Sheridan's cavalry in 1864 and 1865 would afford one explanation why Lee's army was so much more easy to beat in April, 1865, than in May, 1864. Grant made war on Lee's materials as well as his men.

Returning now to the position of affairs on the North Anna, we find that Wilson's cavalry division, demonstrating against the enemy's left, and destroying portions of the Virginia Central Railroad there, gave Lee the impression which Grant wished to give him, that our army was next about to move against that flank; for Grant, being persuaded that he could not attack with success on the North Anna, now pro-

jected his seventh flank movement in the opposite direction; and starting on the night of the 26th, the army moved down the North Anna and Pamunkey rivers, crossed the latter at Hundley's and Hanover Town, and by midday of the 28th was in position facing south, with its right across the Hanover Court House Road at Crump's Creek and its left near the Totopotomoy Creek at the crossing of the road which runs from Hawes's Shop to Old Church; and the cavalry, pressing forward on the road from Hanover to Richmond, drove the enemy's cavalry from breastworks across the road a mile south of Hawes's Shop, late in the evening, after a hard fight. Mr. Ropes has said that General Grant "does not seem to have had a very definite idea of accomplishing anything by this move beyond finding a new set of intrenchments to attack;" but I cannot escape the belief that his motive was to move around the flank of the enemy to strike them where there were no breastworks, for Lee did not get his infantry in front of Grant until the afternoon of the 28th, and they then began to throw up the field-works which sheltered them on the next day.¹ A crossing higher up on the Pamunkey than Hundley's would not only have exposed Grant's intention to the enemy at once, but would also have exposed his army to attack while crossing the river.

It has also been said that Lee placed his left at Atlee's Station and his right on Beaver Dam Creek, and that, as his right did not reach the Bethesda Church Road, Grant could probably have moved down that road and doubled up Early's corps on the Confederate right flank, or reached Cold Harbor and New Bridge, or perhaps crossed the Chickahominy to attack Richmond, but that Grant willfully lost this advantage, "making the first and perhaps the only important strategic mistake of the campaign;" and that, instead of taking his advantage, he "occupied the 29th and 30th in finding out where Lee's army was and in attacking him in position."

¹ Va. Camp. 165, 166.

The diary of Longstreet's corps¹ states that that corps occupied the ground between Hundley's Corner and Walnut Grove Church on the 28th, and that on the 30th it moved thence to take the place of Early's corps, when the latter moved to the right from Hundley's Corner to cover the Bethesda Church Road. The War Department maps indicate that Longstreet's corps was not intrenched between Hundley's Corner and Walnut Grove Church, and the records now at hand do not state whether it was formed in line of battle or not, but it seems certain that, with the corps lying on this ground, it substantially covered the Bethesda Church Road,² and that Grant could not have doubled up Early's right flank by moving down that road, and could not have reached Cold Harbor or New Bridge, or crossed the Chickahominy by the Bethesda Church Road.³

The operations here were as follows: On the 29th Wright's corps reconnoitred as far as Hanover Court House, meeting no force but cavalry. The 2d corps found the enemy intrenched on the south side of the Totopotomoy at the crossing of the road from Hawes's Shop to Richmond, and formed line facing them on both sides of this road; and two divisions of the 5th corps, crossing the Totopotomoy, moved along the Shady Grove Church Road and found the enemy in force at Hundley's Corner. On the morning of the 30th Wright's corps was sent to turn the enemy's left flank, but it was so delayed by swamps and thickets that it arrived in position too late to attack that day. Hancock's skirmishers in the mean time captured the most of the intrenched skirmish line in their front, while on his left Burnside with sharp skirmishing crossed the Totopotomoy, bringing his left near the Shady Grove Church Road. Warren, while moving down this road, sent a brigade over to the Bethesda Church Road to look after a force supposed to be cavalry that his skirmishers had

¹ 67 W. R. 1058.

² See W. R. Atlas, pl. LXIII, 8.

³ Va. Camp. 106, 169.

encountered there, but it was Early's corps which had been extended to that road, as before stated: Early's men attacked this brigade of Warren's, drove it over on Warren's left flank and followed with a resolute attack on two divisions of Warren's corps, but were driven back by these divisions. During this conflict a brigade of Barlow's division of Hancock's corps attacked on its front to relieve Warren, and carried the enemy's advanced line of rifle-pits. This attack was stopped, by General Meade's order, in less than forty minutes from its beginning. It was the only attack on the enemy in position on the 29th or 30th, excepting the attacks of skirmish lines.

Smith's corps from the Army of the James began arriving at White House on the 30th, and Grant apprehended that the enemy might try to pass around our left flank to fall on him on his march up the south bank of the Pamunkey; and so, although it was determined that the enemy were in too strong position to assault on the 31st, our lines were pressed close against them and an attack threatened, and Sheridan on the same day, under instructions to watch towards Cold Harbor, finding Fitz-Hugh Lee's cavalry division at Old Cold Harbor in a threatening attitude, attacked him and took the place. The enemy sent Hoke's division there late in the day. As important roads met there and the position was in the line of a further extension to the left and was important to our army, Sheridan was ordered to hold it at all hazards, and Wright's corps was dispatched there, it being the plan to attack the enemy there before they could intrench, with this corps and Smith's.¹ The enemy had also formed the plan of moving in force on Cold Harbor, and Kershaw's division, which had joined Hoke's there June 1, made two attacks on Sheridan and was repulsed. The 6th corps got into position by two o'clock in the afternoon of June 1, and Smith's corps by six in the evening. The enemy in the mean time had moved

¹ Va. Camp. 172.

two divisions to the right to connect with Kershaw, and the latter had connected on the right with Hoke and was intrenched in a line across and at right angles with the road leading from Old Cold Harbor through New Cold Harbor to Richmond. Smith's corps formed on the right of this road and Wright's corps formed on the left of it about fourteen hundred yards in front of the enemy, and advanced on them at six o'clock. The 6th corps carried a part of the enemy's main line, capturing 500 prisoners, and Smith's corps carried the intrenched picket line, Devens's division capturing 250 prisoners. Our total loss was about 2200.¹ The enemy's loss is unknown beyond the 750 prisoners. That night Hancock's corps was sent from the right to the left to reinforce Wright, and they were to attack early in the morning of June 2, but the fatigue of the troops and the want of preparation led to postponing the attack to the morning of the 3d. In the mean time, on the morning of the 2d, Lee, perceiving the withdrawal of Hancock from our right, sent other troops to extend his own right, and sent Early to turn our right flank. He struck Burnside while the latter was withdrawing to cover Warren's right, which was near Bethesda Church, and took a large number of prisoners from the skirmish line of this and the 5th corps, but was stopped by the line of battle.

Hancock's corps having formed on the left of Wright, extending as far as Barker's Mill, a general assault was made by these two corps and Smith's, June 3, and it failed. The 5th and 6th corps had some success in attacking Early's corps. Our loss June 3 was between 6000 and 7000 men.² The enemy's is not known, but it must have been very much less. The battle of this day was at New Cold Harbor. It is a common error to state the whole loss at both Cold Harbors, May 30 to June 3 as if they all occurred in this charge of June 3, and in this way the magnitude of the reverse has been much exaggerated.

¹ Va. Camp. 176.

² Va. Camp. 191; see also N. & L. 115, note 3.

General Grant has been unsparingly censured for this attack, and he himself has said in his Memoirs that he always regretted it, and that not only was there no advantage whatever gained by it to compensate for the heavy loss we sustained, but that it temporarily revived the hopes of the Army of Northern Virginia and had the opposite effect on his own army.

General Humphreys says that when this assault was ordered, there seemed to be no chance for further turning movements; that, as both of Lee's flanks were protected, the front was the only part to assault, and that, if success had crowned the attack, severe loss might have been inflicted on Lee's army in the disorder incident to falling back on the Chickahominy.

Badeau says that a withdrawal to the south side of the James would have weakened Grant's hold on the nation, and that the examples of Donelson and Chattanooga, and Old Cold Harbor two days before, and the belief that the enemy were enfeebled and depressed, influenced Grant to order this assault. It may also be said that afterwards in the assault on Petersburg, April 2, 1865, works of far greater strength were carried and the enemy were routed behind them. The difference in the situations was that in the latter one the enemy were more enfeebled and dispirited than in the former. Grant miscalculated the time rather than the possibilities.

In a former paper ("The Northern Volunteer") I quoted Swinton's statement that some hours after the failure of the first assault the men refused to obey an order from General Meade to renew the attack,¹ and I take this opportunity to call attention to the fact that this statement seems to have been made without foundation, as General Grant denied it in the newspapers in March, 1884, and no mention of it is to be found in General Humphreys's work, or the reports of the Union commanders.

¹ Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac, 487.

The army remained in position at Cold Harbor until June 12, pressed close up to the enemy and making regular approaches, with a view to preventing the withdrawal of any portion of them to be sent against Hunter, who was moving on Lynchburg. Sheridan started on the 7th with two divisions of cavalry to meet Hunter at Charlottesville, and with him to destroy the Virginia Central Railroad from that point to Hanover Junction and then to rejoin the Army of the Potomac. Hunter defeated three brigades under Jones at Piedmont, June 5, and, meeting Crook and Averill from West Virginia at Staunton on the 8th, moved on Lynchburg by way of Lexington. Lynchburg was too important to the Confederacy to be risked, and as soon as Lee heard of Jones's defeat, he sent Breckinridge's force, which had joined him May 20, back to the Valley, and on the 13th Early's corps was dispatched to Charlottesville to strike Hunter's force in the rear and then move up the Valley and cross the Potomac to threaten Washington. It has been said that Lee sent Early away because he felt able to spare his force to threaten Washington. It seems that he was sent to save Lynchburg as a paramount necessity. General Humphreys says:¹ "The object in threatening Washington appears to have been the protection of Lynchburg and the upper part of the Valley of Virginia. It could hardly have been made with the expectation of drawing off from around Richmond any very large part of our forces operating against it."

A few days after the battle of Cold Harbor General Halleck proposed to Grant that he should invest Richmond north of the James, but Grant adhered to what General Humphreys calls "the original plan of campaign,"¹ and on the 9th of June preparations were directed for crossing the James. This, although an abandonment of the attempt to capture Richmond, or draw the enemy out by menacing it, was directly in accordance with the intention which Grant had

¹ Va. Camp. 194, 195.

announced to the commanders of the two armies before starting for the Wilderness, "to put both their armies south of the James River in case of failure to destroy Lee without it."¹

Let us now, before following the army across the James, summarize the events of the campaign from May 5 to June 12, to see whether the criticisms on the campaign are sustained.

To begin with, our losses have been greatly magnified. The figures for the different engagements in Phisterer's Statistical Record (p. 216) aggregate 81,837. Swinton places the killed, wounded, and missing at upwards of 60,000.² General Meade, in his report made November 1, 1864, reckoned the loss at 54,000, but said that his report was made mainly from memory and personal notes and documents, as he had no subordinate reports. Badeau cites the regimental records on file in the War Department for figures that make the number 43,349,³ and the Surgeon-General's Report makes it 45,945.³ While the regimental rolls are to be relied on as stating the full number of killed and missing, they may not always report men as wounded who are absent in hospital or who have returned to duty or have been discharged between two musters, and, on the other hand, the Surgeon-General's report probably cannot be relied on for a complete report of killed and missing. General Humphreys carefully selected statistics from both these sources, which give about 50,000, omitting perhaps the few hundred casualties between Cold Harbor and the James.⁴

The origin of Phisterer's enormous errors may be found in the method which was apparently adopted by him to ascertain our loss at the Battle of the Wilderness. He places it at

¹ See 67 W. R. 15, 16; 60 W. R. 828, 885, 904.

² Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac, 481. ³ Badeau, iii, 713, ii, 331.

⁴ Va. Camp. 53, 117, 224, 241, 242, 424. The returns published since this paper was read give 45,682 killed and wounded and 8822 missing — a total of 54,504 for the period May 4 to June 12, including those in "minor skirmishes, etc., en route June 7 to 24," in the cavalry. 67 W. R. 185, 187, 188.

37,737. General Humphreys has pointed out ¹ that the Confederate General Willcox, in a published account of the Battle of the Wilderness, arrived at the same number by adding together the alternative estimates of the Surgeon-General's report and accepted the result without question.

In the total of Grant's losses between the Rapidan and James some writers include the 10,000 sick sent back during the movement. This leads us to compare the amount of sickness in Grant's army with that in McClellan's on the Peninsula, as shown by the "Medical and Surgical History of the Rebellion."

The comparison is as follows :

<i>Date.</i>	<i>No. sick in Hospital.</i>	<i>Per cent. of mesne strength.</i>
May 1862	16,535	22.8
May 1864	13,078	11.3
June 1862	18,369	23.3
June 1864	13,994	14.1
July 1862	40,158	37.8
July 1864	19,509	26.1

It is a curious fact, worthy of notice in connection with the statement sometimes made that Grant subjected his armies to unheard of mental strain, that nervous maladies were more numerous in June and July, 1862, than in the same months in 1864.²

The Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac reported that over 20,000 sick were sent away from the Peninsula April 15 to August 20, 1862.³ This number added to 23,000 lost in battle gives 43,000 or more to compare with the like loss of 64,426 in Grant's army May 5 to June 15, 1864.

In a former paper ("The Failure to take Petersburg June 15, 1864"), in the absence of published returns, I accepted Swinton's exaggerated estimate of Grant's loss in action May 5 to June 15, 1864, at 60,000, and I estimated McClellan's

¹ Va. Camp. 424.

² M. & S.

³ 12 W. R. 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 211, 213, 216.

loss to have been as great as Grant's by comparison of the former's statement July 15¹ that he then had present for duty and sick 105,224, with the certificate of Assistant Adjutant-General Townsend¹ that in the Army of the Potomac April 1, 1862, there were 145,292 present, of whom 136,444 were "for duty," and that prior to June 15 it was reinforced by 35,375, of whom 32,360 were "for duty." Subsequent study of the return of March 31² shows an apparent discrepancy between its figures and those of the Adjutant-General, which requires explanation before the latter can be accepted. This return gives only 110,826 "present" and 104,250, "present for duty," without McDowell's, Banks's, and Wadsworth's commands. Adopting the latter number, and estimating that for the 5th New York and 2d Delaware³ 1600 is to be added to the 32,360 reinforcements of the certificate, 138,210 is reached as McClellan's total force. His loss, if placed at 43,000 as above, was about 31 per cent. The Confederate loss in action in the Peninsular Campaign was upwards of 28,450 out of a force of about 70,000,⁴ or upwards of 40 per cent. without counting the loss from sickness. Grant received 46,934⁵ reinforcements including Smith's command of 10,000⁶ from the 18th corps, making his total force about 162,000. His loss of 64,504 in battle and from sickness⁷ was about 40 per cent. Lee started with 62,000 and received about 12,000 reinforcements.⁸

The Confederate losses between the Rapidan and the James in 1864 will probably never be known, because not only did

¹ 1 C. W. pp. 343-345.

² 14 W. R. 53.

³ 14 W. R. 260.

⁴ N. & L. 80, 81, 86.

⁵ Badeau's estimate of 40,000 (ii, p. 328 *et seq.*) is shown to be inadequate by returns published in 1891 in which Abercrombie reported 34,645 as sent forward, to which should be added 4889 for the 29th Mass., 5th N. H., 3d and 4th Del., 1st Md., 157th Pa. Cav. and 29th colored, and from which 2600 should be deducted for 187th Pa. and 2d Pa. Heavy Art., which arrived after Cold Harbor. 69 W. R. 364, 414, 738, 14, 261, 304, 443, 453, 724, 739; 81 W. R. 47, 48; 69 W. R. 602.

⁶ 67 W. R. 999. ⁷ *Ante*, p. 448, note 3, p. 449. ⁸ Va. Camp. 124, 125, 164.

the rapidity of the campaign and the constant loss of commanding officers probably interfere with making reports, but most of those which were made were probably lost or destroyed in the flight from Richmond and Petersburg; at any rate they have not come to light up to the present time.¹

But very careful and conservative estimates of their losses in action have been made by General Humphreys as follows: ²

Loss in the Wilderness	11,400
Spottsylvania May 10 and 12	12,000
May 19	900
May 27 to June 1	4,000
	<hr/>
	28,300
To this we should add as the balance of 10,000 prisoners reported by the Commissary General of prisoners (Badeau, ii, 332), after deducting say 6500 prisoners included in the above	3,500
	<hr/>
	31,800

This was about 43 per cent. of Lee's force of 74,000 without the loss from sickness. This leaves out of account the killed and wounded in the operations of the cavalry and the operations of May 8 and 9, and the operations on the North Anna, including Hill's.

The criticism that General Grant erred in not following Sherman's plan of flanking the enemy out of position after position until they could be brought to bay where our superior numbers could tell, is not a happy one, because, without

¹ Ewell reported that out of his 15,500 effectives he had 8000 left May 11, and 5100 May 19, and that he lost over half his force May 4 to 27. The Confederate Medical Director reported Ewell's loss in killed and wounded at 4453. In view of these figures it is safe to say he lost at least 7750. Losses are also reported in 4 brigades of Longstreet's corps to June 15, of 1805, in Bryan and Mahone's brigades in the Wilderness, and McGowan's May 12, at 737, and in the artillery to December 4, at 1663, of which 1200 may safely be attributed to the period up to June 12, giving a total of 11,492 for 19 out of 34 brigades of infantry and the artillery. 67 W. R. 1053, 1060, 1064, 1075, 1090, 1094.

² Va. Camp. pp. 54, 89, 105, 112, 193.

disparagement to him or his army, it is to be recalled that Sherman never manœuvred the enemy into such a position, and that Grant flanked Lee out of position oftener than Sherman did. Johnston was pushed from Dalton to Atlanta, a distance of about a hundred miles, in a little over two months. Lee was pushed from the Rapidan to Petersburg, about the same distance, in forty days (when Johnston was relieved of command, he reminded Jefferson Davis that Lee's retreat had been quite as rapid as his). Grant executed nine flank movements. Sherman executed four. Grant assaulted field-works on seven days and Sherman on seven days, the object being the same, but Grant's assaults being more persistent and on a larger scale. Grant's army was in contact with the enemy almost every day for forty days and so was Sherman's. Of the month of May General Cox writes:¹ "Every day had brought its combat, and in the latter part of it the army had lived day and night under fire."

It is true that from Dalton to Atlanta Sherman lost only about 17,000 men in battle,² but he knew that, although the leader opposed to him persisted in his Fabian policy, the day could only be postponed when a great sacrifice of life must be made, and it was only the inconsiderate and hot-headed nature of Hood which relieved Sherman's army from a tremendous struggle around Atlanta.

General Sherman believed that he would have to do a great deal more fighting at some time, and, when he ordered the general assault at Kenesaw, he felt that it was better to chance a victory by assaulting earthworks than to flank Johnston out of his reach again.

To return now to the situation at Cold Harbor. On the night of June 12 Smith's corps marched for White House Landing, to take shipping around to Bermuda Hundred on the James. On that same night the 5th corps marched for Long Bridge, and crossing the Chickahominy there marched

¹ Atlanta, p. 87.

² Atlanta, pp. 88, 135.

out towards Richmond, and, facing that city, held the White Oak Swamp Bridge and the Charles City and Central roads. The rest of the army, crossing the Chickahominy at Long Bridge and lower down, under cover of this movement, pushed for Wilcox's Landing, on the James River. Lee, awakened to this movement, nervously moved his army to Malvern Hill and Riddle's Shop to protect Richmond; but although our advance under Smith had attacked the works around Petersburg and half our army had crossed the James on the 15th, Lee, as late as 10.30 A. M. on the 16th, telegraphed Beauregard, who was crying for reinforcements, that he did not know the position of Grant's army, and could not strip the north bank of the James, and at 3 P. M. he had not heard that Grant had crossed the James.¹ In the paper above mentioned ("The Failure to take Petersburg, June 15, 1864") I have traced the history of the 15th of June, and therefore will not dwell on it here, but will repeat my conviction that Petersburg could have been taken on that day. It was due to Grant as the consummation of a piece of most brilliant strategy, and if it had been accomplished, Lee would have been obliged to leave Richmond for the interior.

The 2d corps crossed the James on the night of the 14th, with orders to march to a point about halfway between City Point and Petersburg. As the orders did not seem to require extraordinary haste, Hancock delayed for rations until 10.30 on the morning of the 15th.² The destination named for him carried him somewhat out of the direct road to Petersburg, and it was not until late in the day that he was intercepted by orders to go to Smith's aid in front of Petersburg. He arrived at dusk, and then put his corps at Smith's disposal, but the latter would not advance that night beyond the works which he had taken. Without doubt, if Hancock had arrived

¹ Va. Camp. 214.

² The delay was pursuant to General Meade's order. Hancock had one day's rations in hand and did not need to delay for more. 80 W. R. 303, 304.

two hours earlier, as he would have done if his orders had contemplated it, Petersburg would have fallen that night, and General Grant is therefore criticised for not letting Hancock know early in the day that the capture of Petersburg was to be attempted, and for sending him so far out of the road to Petersburg; but there was ample force in front of Petersburg,¹ and all that was wanted was a general who would take the responsibility of assaulting. Grant supposed that Smith was such a general. If he had effected the capture of the place, the world would have applauded Grant's prudence in not disclosing the plan to any one in the Army of the Potomac. Secrecy was essential to success, and so great was Grant's secrecy that he took the order for Smith's movement to Butler in person on the 14th and disclosed it to no other commander unless to General Meade.² It seems to me that Grant thought that the 2d corps would be needed only to reinforce Smith in Petersburg or guard his rear from an attack from Bermuda Hundred, that it was ordered to the City Point Railroad to oppose any force that might break through Butler's lines and cross the Appomattox in Smith's rear, and that it was either Smith's delays or the erroneous impression that he had taken the outer line of works early in the day that induced Grant to order the 2d corps to him.

I have before called attention to the question whether, if Grant had placed his army on the south side of the James without having fought a battle, he could have succeeded in demolishing Lee's army as he finally did; and the inquiry now suggests itself whether, if Grant had manœuvred down from the Rapidan to Cold Harbor without fighting, he could there

¹ Badeau, 362.

² The writer does not assume to judge whether he disclosed it to General Meade on returning from General Butler on the night of the 14th. General Grant says that he did and General Meade asserts to the contrary. Grant's *Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 294; 80 W. R. 315.

have so excited Lee's apprehensions by the demonstration of one corps as to conceal the movement across the James, and whether he could have crossed it without a great battle, and, if he had crossed, whether Lee would have followed him rather than strike for Washington as he did in 1862, when McClellan lay at Harrison's Landing with nearly 90,000 men.

It seems to me that the verdict of history will be that the campaign from the Rapidan to Cold Harbor did much to change the relative prowess of the armies and courage of the commanders; and as I have said before, the final result of the campaigns which began on the Rapidan and ended at Appomattox Court House was that the enemy lost nearly as many men, if not more than the Union army lost. It is in vain to search the records which are in print for a statement of the Confederate losses, but I have above shown that

The losses between the Rapidan and James were at least . . .	31,800
Prisoners captured, and estimates of killed and wounded in a few cases, from June 14, 1864, to March 24, 1865, to be found in General Humphreys's work, give	10,000
Loss reported in front of Bermuda Hundred ¹	3,226
The army which was destroyed between March 24 and April 9 numbered at least	67,537
The total is	112,563

I believe that this would be swelled by over 20,000 if full reports of the Confederate commanders were at hand. The number of Lee's army March 24, 1865, is arrived at as follows:²

Force returned in the morning report of the Army of Northern Virginia, infantry and cavalry, February 28, 1865	56,895
Artillery, February 20	6,113
Ewell's force, Department of Richmond, March 20	4,529
	<hr/> 67,537

¹ 68 W. R. 205, 218, 245, 253, 265.

² 95 W. R. 388, 390; 96 W. R. 1274; see also Va. Camp. 434.

Apparently this total does not include Rosser's cavalry, the heavy artillery, or the naval and local force, amounting perhaps to 2000 in all.¹

The loss in action of the Armies of the Potomac and James, May 4, 1864, to April 9, 1865, was 124,166,² of which 63,626 occurred prior to June 14.³

NOTE

May, 1904. The recent statement to the writer by Colonel Dodge, that his view of General Grant in "Some Federal and Confederate Commanders" (vol. x, Papers Mil. Hist. Soc. of Mass.) has been modified by later studies, and that he should not care to have his comments on the Wilderness (pp. 34 *et seq.*) taken as a critical discussion of that campaign, renders it unnecessary here carefully to weigh them, as the authority of Colonel Dodge would otherwise require. It may not, however, be out of place to note the following suggestions with reference to those comments :

1. Grant's march of May 4 was primarily an attempt to turn Lee's flank, and the route taken was better than that via Spottsylvania Court House would have been, because it led more directly to the enemy's flank and rear and left more ground for further manœuvres towards Richmond, and because by pursuing it the Union army left the Spottsylvania route free for the trains. If the army had marched on the latter route the trains would necessarily have followed it on the same route without effectual cover. While Ewell had a shorter march, Longstreet had a longer one, to reach the Union army, than would have been necessary to strike it on the Spottsylvania route.

2. The Salient at Spottsylvania was a vulnerable part such as military theory designates for attack, and it was the weakest point in the Confederate lines ; a reconnoissance of it was attempted, and

¹ Va. Camp. 434 ; 95 W. R. 1276.

² 67 W. R. 195 ; 87 W. R. 161, 162 ; 95 W. R. 601 ; 63 W. R. 18, 19 ; 80 W. R. 238, 268 ; 87 W. R. 132, 144, 161.

³ 67 W. R. 188 ; 68 W. R. 18, 19, 187, 797-99.

it does not appear that its failure to disclose the lay of the enemy's lines diminished the success of the assault. The manœuvres of May 11 induced Lee to withdraw Ewell's artillery from Johnston's front, and the assault of the 12th was made in its absence. Appropriate orders were given for massing the Union troops opposite the points to be attacked.

3. After May 12 Grant resorted to "an assault all along the line" only at Cold Harbor.¹ It would have been fortunate if he had there taken the precautions which Colonel Dodge suggests, because the result might have been the abandonment of the plan to assault, but they would not have disclosed salient or dominant part, or other key to the enemy's position, the carrying of which, with any possible disposition of the Union army, could have resulted in driving Lee from his position.

4. No scheme of manœuvres is apparent which could have induced Lee, after the Battle of the Wilderness, to afford Grant the chance, between that field and the James, of attacking the Confederate army outside of intrenchments.

THE TRUCE FOR COLLECTING THE WOUNDED AT COLD HARBOR

The censure passed by Mr. Ropes on General Grant for the delay of five days before arranging a truce for the recovery of the wounded left between the lines after the assault of June 3 (*ante*, p. 360) is perhaps based upon General Morgan's narrative. The correspondence,² since published in the War Records, shows that General Morgan could not have intended to attribute the responsibility for the delay up to June 6 to General Grant. It was Hancock's statement, in his dispatch of 1 p. m., June 5, that he was informed that wounded were still lying between the lines, which led Grant to take measures for sending out the flag of truce, which he did immediately. The commander of the armies would not have been justified, without such information from his subordinates, to have asked for a truce upon the assumption that there were

¹ For attacks of May 17 and 30, see *ante*, pp. 439, 444.

² 69 W. R. 599, 603, 604.

wounded remaining between the lines. Morgan's narrative¹ states that the flag of truce went through the lines at about 5 P. M., but that the absence of Lee from his headquarters delayed his reply until nearly 10 o'clock. The narrative also says, with reference to the delay which followed, "It was understood at the time that the delay was caused by something akin to points of etiquette," and it implies that it was Grant who was responsible for them. It also recites certain particulars supposed to be in the correspondence between him and Lee, the absence of which might have changed General Morgan's conclusions, if he had known the fact. This correspondence has since been published. Grant's note,² which was sent under the flag of truce above mentioned, proposed a general arrangement for both parties for thereafter collecting their wounded between the lines. Lee in reply³ expressed his fear that the method proposed would lead to "misunderstanding and difficulty," proposed instead the customary flag of truce from either party desiring to remove its dead or wounded, and said, "It will always afford me pleasure to comply with such a request as far as circumstances will permit." Grant assumed that this was an assent to his proposal for the case then present, and replied on the morning of June 6⁴ proposing 12 to 3 P. M. that day as the time when he should send out parties under white flags to collect the dead and wounded. Lee replied⁵ on the same day that he had not intended to assent, but to say that permission should be "asked for by flag of truce in the usual way," and that he had directed the proposed parties under white flags "to be turned back." Then Grant, on the same day,⁶ formally asked permission to collect his dead and wounded at a time to be fixed by Lee, who in reply, by dispatch⁷ dated 7 P. M., fixed 8 to 10 that evening. Grant received this dispatch between 11 and 12 P. M., and therefore, on the morning of June 7, asked for further time,⁸ which, by dispatch dated 2 P. M., Lee fixed at 6 to 8 P. M. that day,⁹ at which time the parties were sent out.⁷ This correspondence between Grant and Lee was set out by Badeau in 1881 (vol. ii, p. 309, note) and by Grant in his *Memoirs* (vol. ii, p. 272) in 1886.

¹ MS. copy in files of M. H. S.

² 69 W. R. 600.

³ *Ibid.* 638.

⁴ *Ibid.* 639.

⁵ *Ibid.* 666.

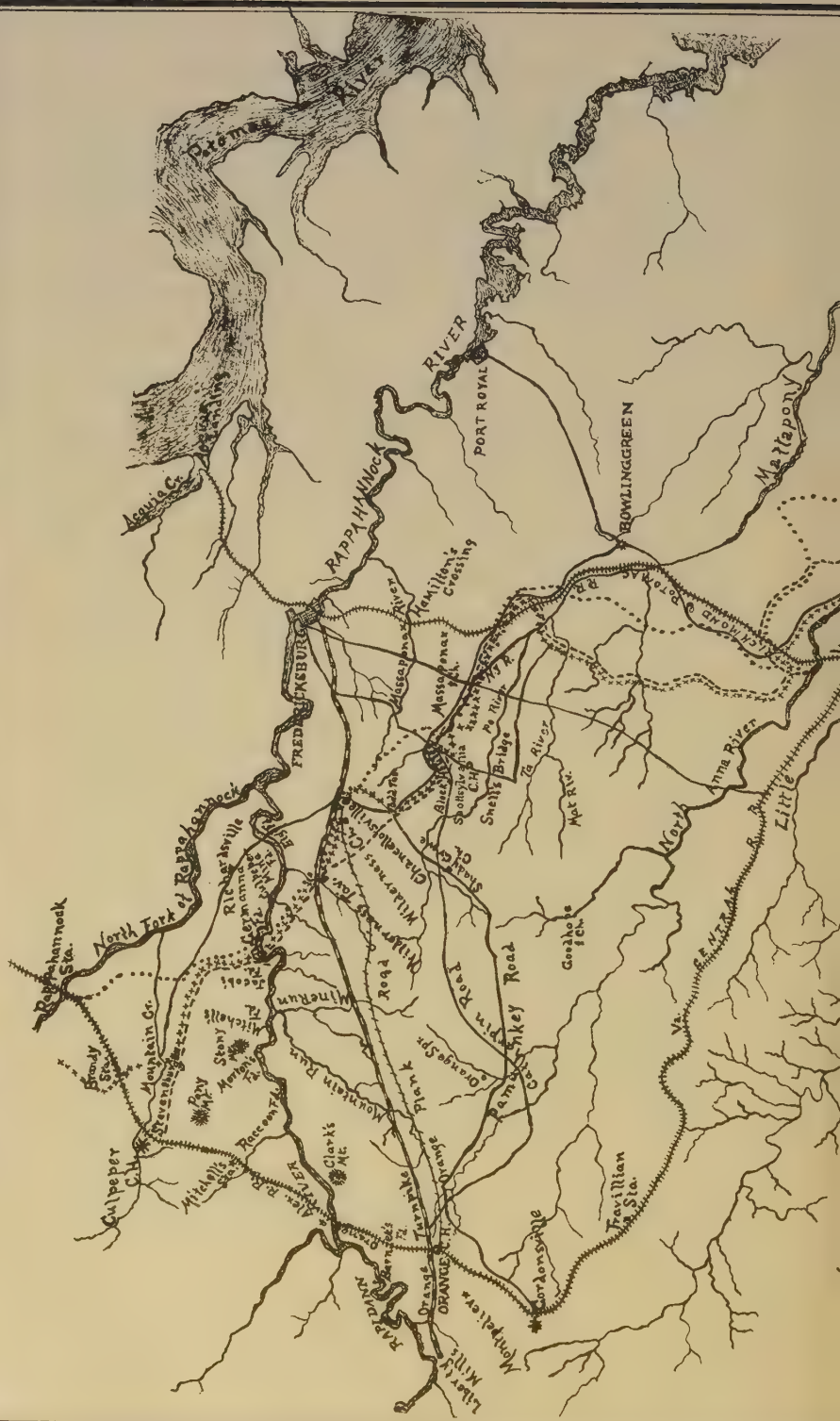
⁶ *Ibid.* 667.

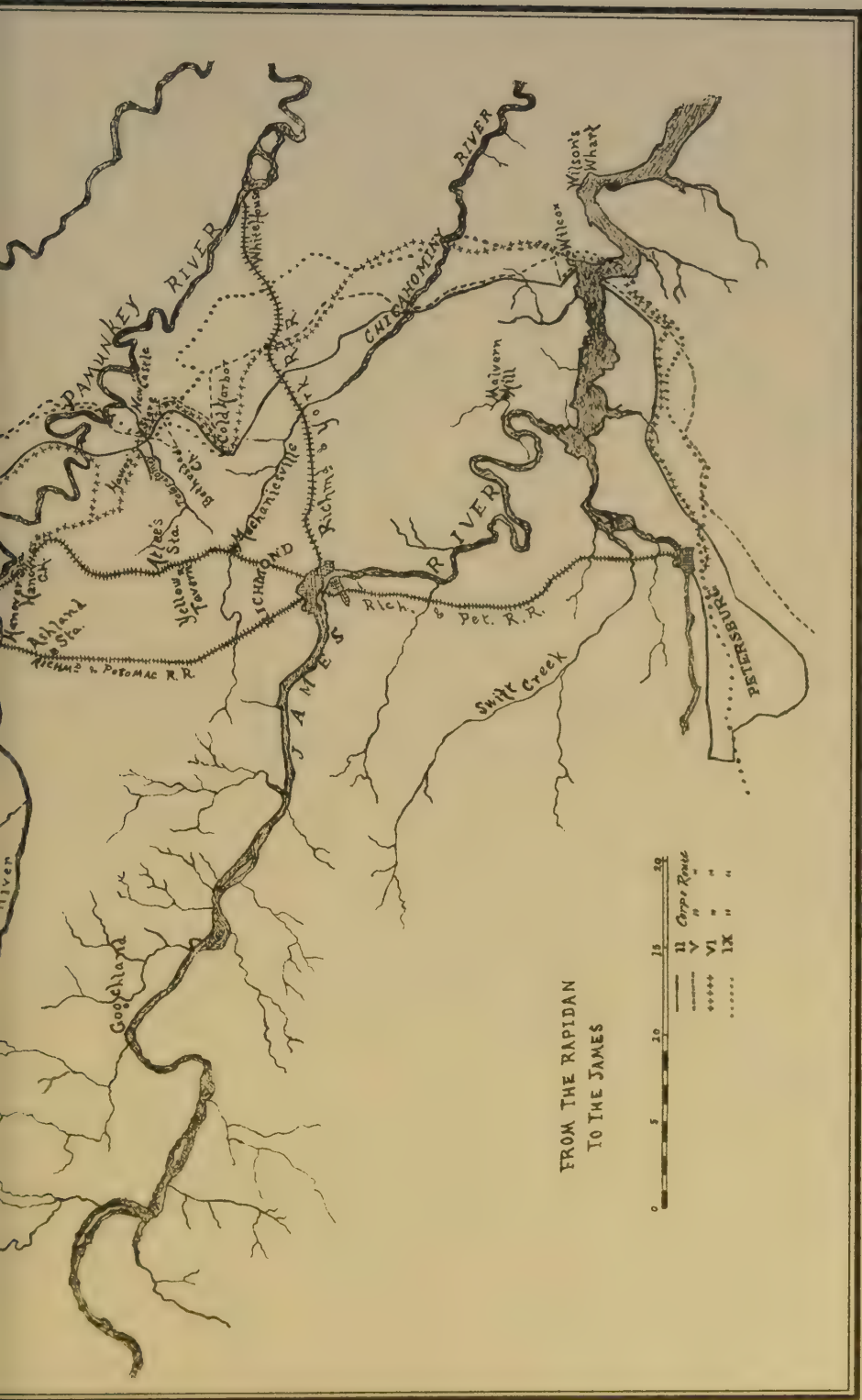
⁷ *Ibid.* 667, 669.

If, from a military point of view, it can be said that Grant was censurable for proposing a general arrangement for both parties instead of forthwith asking permission to recover his wounded, or for allowing his assumption that Lee had in any degree assented to his first proposal, to delay his request for such permission, he rectified the error early enough to have collected the wounded June 6, if Lee's reply had not been delayed. I cannot see how from any point of view Grant could be held responsible for the delays on June 7.

It seems clear that Lee's refusal of June 6 was to compel Grant's request, as an acknowledgment of the Confederate victory.

It is not to be thought for a moment that either commander purposely delayed his replies to the other. These delays must be laid to the inevitable difficulties incident to the passage of hostile lines, the long distances, the movements of the commanders, and the barrier which darkness raises.





FROM THE RAPIDS
TO THE JAMES

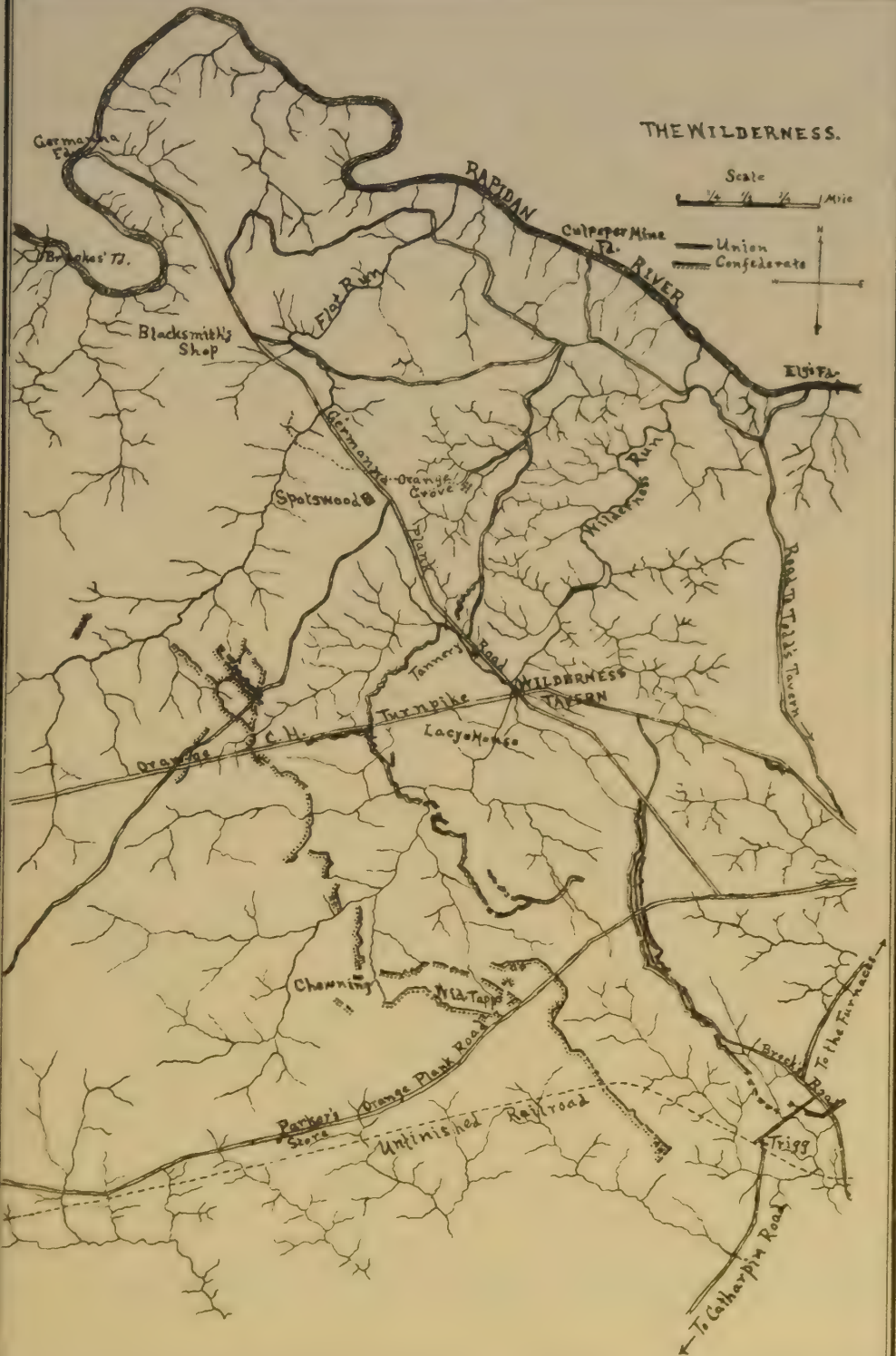


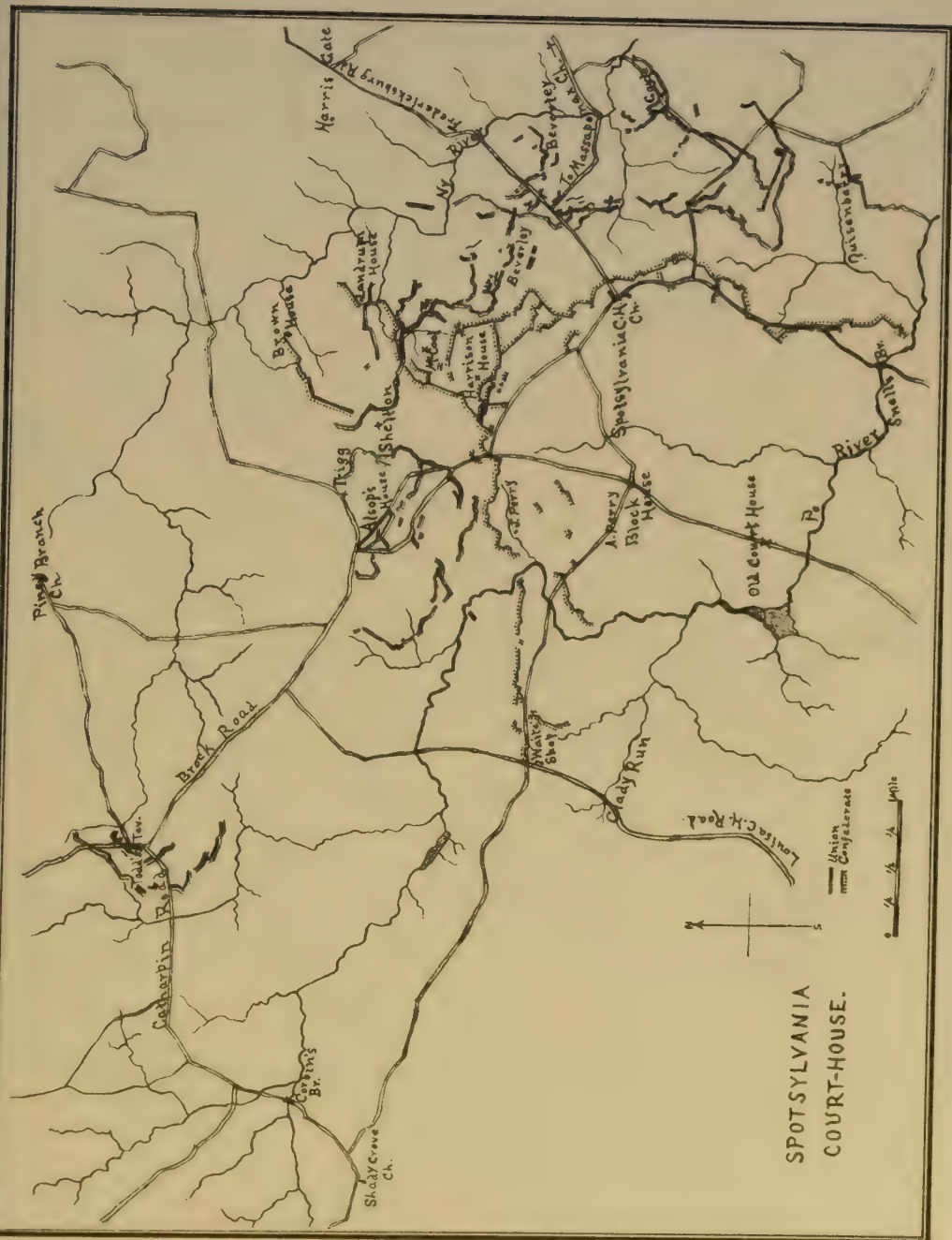
THE WILDERNESS.

Scale

$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ 1 Mile

— Union
--- Confederate





SPOTSYLVANIA
COURT-HOUSE.



